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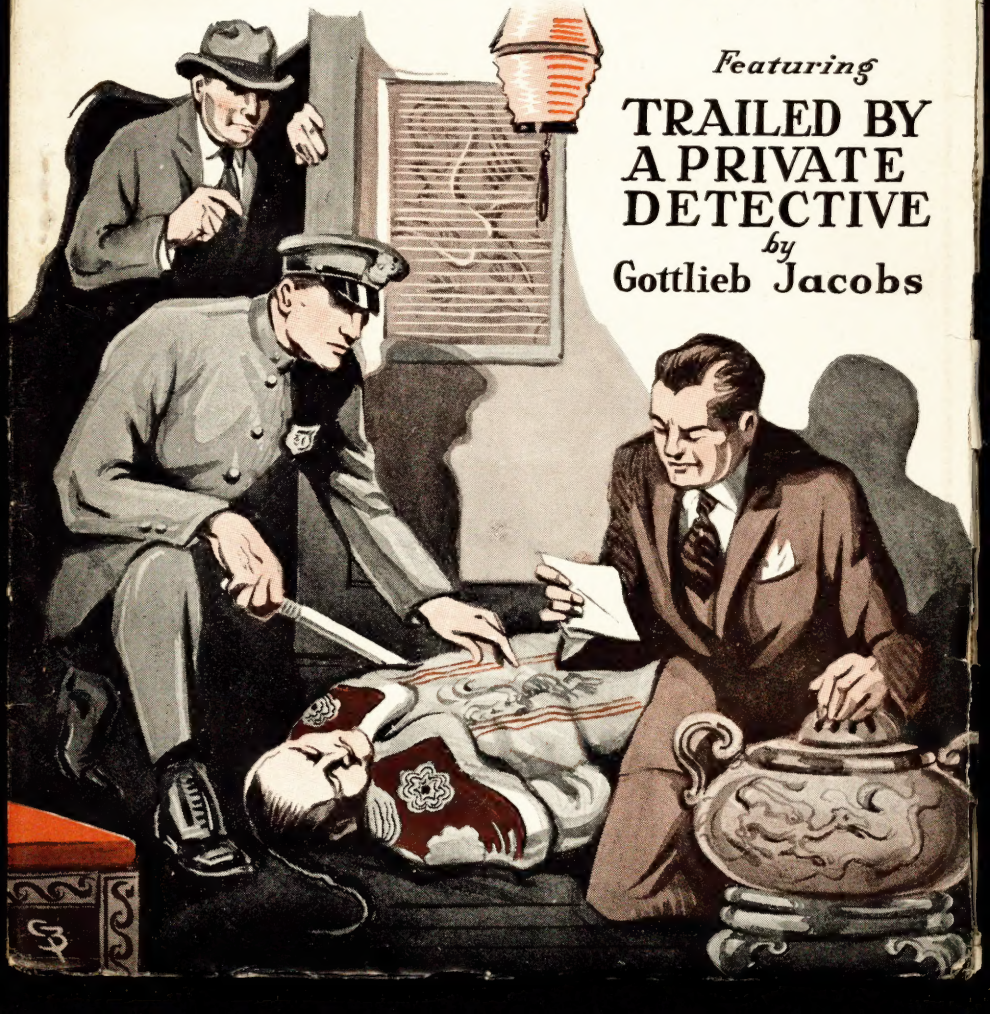
MYSTERY MAGAZINE

DETECTIVE STORIES

NOVEMBER 1, 1922 VOL. V, No. 1



Featuring

TRAILED BY A PRIVATE DETECTIVE

by

Gottlieb Jacobs

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

Vol. V. NOVEMBER 1, 1922 No. 119

ISSUED TWICE A MONTH

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Friend Reader!

NOW do you like the new form in which we are now getting out this magazine? In our former issue we stated that a change was going to begin with No. 120, but luckily we were enabled to put our new cover and new date on one issue earlier, so we did not wait.

We told you some time ago to watch us grow, and we have promised to keep improving the magazine. You can see that "Mystery" is much better now than it used to be. But a handsome new cover is not the only improvement. We are striving all the time to get better and still better stories for your entertainment. For example, watch for the next feature story. It is a splendid detective novelette entitled "The Mouse Trap." This story was written by the famous authoress Edith Sessions Tupper, whose books and novels many of you have doubtless read. Mrs. Tupper never wrote a more interesting story than this one in all her career. We most earnestly urge all our friends not to miss this feature story and we are sure you will thoroughly enjoy it.

Among the short stories is a "dandy" by Lester Le Grange, author of the celebrated Wayne stories. The title is "A Case of Revenge," in which Wayne of the Secret Service handles a local affair, saves an innocent victim from the chair and uncovers a tragedy. "The Shadow Dance," by Donna Reith Scott, is a peculiar story of Eugene Tressler, the composer, who gains a wonderful inspiration by watching an absorbing police case. You will like this odd story. The next little gem, "The Missing Bullet," is by Raleigh E. Ross. It details a tragedy in the life of a novelist and is full of excitement and suspense. "Cleopatra's Sister" is a story written by Harold F. Podhaski. It deals with the strange adventure of a police reporter. The finish of this fascinating tale will surprise even a veteran at guessing the conclusion of puzzling stories. The second installment of Peter Perry's serial "The Ring That Chattered" will be issued, and there will be an abundance of mighty interesting short articles.

Briefly, the next number, in a handsome new cover, printed from clear new type, is going to be our banner edition. And as the reading season for magazines is now on you must not fail to get a copy of No. 120. Like this number it is predated two weeks, but is issued the 1st and 15th of each month as usual. Order according to the number on each issue of the magazine. There was no edition dated October 15th. This one, November 1st, takes its place.

THE EDITOR.

Trailed by a Private Detective

by

Gottlieb Jacobs

CHAPTER ONE

MISUNDERSTANDING

WITH a thousand-and-one noises that proclaimed its coming, the Pullman snorted into the station and halted. From its maw there presently began to flow streams of people.

A tall, tidily dressed gentleman, somewhat grim of countenance, swung from the end car and placed his black leather bag on the stone floor of the station. For a moment he remained undecided which direction to turn, looking about in a manner that betrayed his utter ignorance of the place.

He was certainly the picture of aristocracy. From the soft brown hat that covered his head to the sheer tips of his shoes he was immaculate. There was also a certain breeding about him—a culture in his face which plainly indicated that he was one to the manor born. Even the way in which he stooped to recover his handbag signified refinement.

His uncertainty lasted but a very brief while. With swift, dignified strides he walked along the brass-railed aisles, mingling with the outgoing throng of fellow ex-passengers. Once outside the station he looked briskly to the right and left, as though expectant of something that did not come.

As he started moving away he felt a restraining hand on his arm.

The hand held in it a touch of electricity, for without waiting to learn the identity of its owner he moved to one side like a startled animal. Then, almost before he had a chance to turn about, the broad of a palm came down on his shoulders friendly-wise. He felt his arm being shaken in a firm hand-grasp.

"Eureka! if it isn't Rupert!" a thin, half-hearty voice exclaimed. "Gad, but I'm mighty glad to see you. How are you, Rupert? Where've you been keeping yourself? Where were you all this time, old man?"

Slowly the aristocratic-looking individual addressed as "Rupert" allowed his fingers to relax upon the handle of his leather bag. The black grip slid to the ground. He made no attempt to force a release of his right hand from the hearty grasp of the other. He stared at the interloper tranquilly, mild surprise on his brow.

"I beg your pardon," he declared with deliberate calm, "but my name doesn't happen to be Rupert."

A shadow crossed the other's features, but it passed in a twinkling, scarcely noticeable. The man laughed.

"Still up to your old tricks, I see—eh, Rupert? But it's balm to the eyes to see you again. How much you've changed! Four years is a pretty long time to forego the company of a brother whom you've seen every day before that time. You haven't told me how you are, old man. Married yet?"

He was also a tall man, was the speaker, yet somewhat thinner, more anemic and flaccid-looking. There were creases deep-lined in his features, and his clothes, though of good make, were neglected and seemed almost slovenly. Yet he, too, appeared to have been born, so to speak, with a silver spoon in his mouth; the culture was there in every minute motion of his body.

In all there was a similarity between the two men that was little short of startling, in spite of the difference in their clothes. One would have immediately said, upon looking at them, that they were of the same blood.

The one called Rupert regarded the other with arid, condescending hauteur.

"You are making a big mistake," he declared. "I am not your brother, and my name is not Rupert."

He made as though to move on, but the man was in his way. Incredulousness featured the latter's somewhat drawn face; his brows elevated questioningly. In an obsequious voice he began:

"Come, Rupert! You shouldn't——"

The man called "Rupert" raised an impatient arm.

"Will you let me pass, sir? I don't know you, and if you intend to force an acquaintance in this way I don't care to know you. Once and for all, I'm not your Rupert, and I don't know you. I never saw you before in my life. Now, are you satisfied?"

"You don't mean to say——"

A trace of anger came to the cheeks of "Rupert," so-called. He interrupted the other with an impatient gesture. His voice rose in a raucous intonation that showed him to be entirely out of humor.

"Hang it, this is getting to be beyond a joke. Can't you understand English? I tell you my name is not Rupert; I'm not your brother, nor any one of your relations. Here, I'll show you."

He extracted a card from a neat card-case, handing it to the interloper with a lack of forbearance and a testiness that seemed half habitual. The man before him, amazed as he was at the turn the incident had taken, looked dumbly at the card for a full minute before the import of the printed words finally struck him. Then after he had read,

J. Carson Wetherill,
Travelers' club,

he handed the card back to its owner. Still like one in a maze he stepped aside for the other to pass.

J. Carson Wetherill, with a shrug of his shoulders, retrieved his leather bag. Mumbling something of a churlish nature, he frowned and proceeded on his way.

The man of less rich-wrought garb stared after the tall figure in puzzled meditation, his face a study, eyes glued on the virile frame ahead that perspective made momentarily smaller and smaller.

A half-drunken laborer jostled his elbow, more than one person turned and looked at him curiously, but he was unmindful. As the breach gradually widened between himself and the man whose similarity to him would certainly have impressed even an outsider, he ruminated.

He had often heard of doubles; he and his brother long before had often been mistaken for each other. Perhaps then, after all, this man whose card bore the name of J. Carson Wetherill was not his brother, but one who resembled him greatly.

Still——

Like one suddenly thrown out of a brown study he started, moving forward quickly. Something akin to resolution crystallized and remained in his face. He was not going to be duped, he told himself grimly. If the man ahead was his brother, he would find out; if not, he would make certain of the fact beyond all manner of doubt.

A spring in his step and a glint in his eye that specified an aggressive, surging deter-

mination, he caught up with the clubman half a block away. Oblivious to the curiosity of certain pedestrians, he swung the man around. J. Carson Wetherill, disagreeably surprised, started back; the next moment wrath spread over his countenance as he caught sight of the man before him.

"Well, what now?" he demanded with heat. "If you don't——"

The other interrupted him with a flourishing gesture.

"Listen to me, now. My name is Joseph Campbell, and I live at 2037 Walnut street. Get that? Joseph Campbell, 2037 Walnut street. I don't happen to have a card about me, or I'd give you one. I'm telling you this to show you that I am honest about this thing, if you are not the person I suppose you to be.

"I have a brother, Rupert Campbell, whom I haven't seen for four years. In spite of that I remember him as I do my mother. I know every line of his face, every hair of his head. And I say that you are he, or else the very reincarnation of him."

"You are mistaken, Mr. Campbell," declared the clubman more mildly. "My name is Wetherill, and I never saw you before in my life."

"But can't you understand my predicament, then? I don't know what to believe. You may be my brother, with some motive for hiding your identity. Besides, I am in serious trouble, and only such a person as my brother can help me out of it."

The frown on the face of J. Carson Wetherill lingered, then died.

"I can understand your situation," he declared. "But I can only repeat, Mr. Campbell, that you are entirely under a misapprehension."

He regarded the other quizzically, while Joseph Campbell stood still for an uncertain moment, biting his lip in troubled mortification. Then, quite suddenly, Campbell raised his now haggard face and stared into the clear, cool eyes of Wetherill, his own narrowed and searching.

Abruptly Campbell drew back. A spasm crossed his face.

"You are—you are my brother!" he cried. "I know it; I can see it in your eyes! You can't deny it." He pointed a trembling finger across the street. "Go on; there's an officer. I don't know what devilish motive you have in denying me, but you won't get away with it. I need your help, Rupert, and I intend to have it."

The sneer on Wetherill's face was hardly pleasant to see. He glared at Campbell, who was trembling like a leaf, and who seemed more anemic than ever. With a shrug of his shoulders he looked across the street and motioned silently as he caught the policeman's eye.

The bluecoat, leaning against an electric pole while he watched the affair with professional interest, came across the street with celerity.

Wetherill pointed his finger at Campbell.

"This man is crazy, officer. He insists that I am his brother, though I never saw him before to-day."

The policeman, struck somewhat with the righteous anger in Wetherill's voice, stared at Campbell.

"Well, whatcha gotta say fer yerself?" he demanded.

"This man is my brother," Campbell persisted earnestly. "He says he's not, but he is. He has scores of acquaintances that can identify him."

The policeman scratched his chin. In all his twenty-three years as one of the innumerable limbs of the law, never yet had he run across such a situation. He regarded the two men in a suspicious, I-think-you're-both-crazy sort of way.

"Gets me," he muttered. "Sure, if anybody ast me whut I thought I'd say yer actully was brothers." He turned to Campbell somewhat apologetically. "But if this man says he's not yer brother, why, then that's all there is to it. Come on, now, boys; yer blockin' the sidewalk. Let's break up the party."

Like one in a trance Campbell watched Wetherill hail a taxi. Long after it had disappeared did he stare after the machine, his face a study.

CHAPTER TWO

SAMUEL BROWN, PRIVATE DETECTIVE

A NATURAL "nose for news" plus detective acumen had made Sam Browne one of the most cherished men on the reportorial staff of the *Inquirer*. Browne was a lithe young man, hard of eye and rugged in face and form. A variety of experiences during his employment with the *Inquirer* had made him a well-moulded, judiciously groomed specimen of manhood, keenly "wise" to the bumps of the mundane road, with the insight of an Argus.

Browne harbored an innate love for the work of detection. The game fascinated him. So, after the solving of a famous jewel robbery which had brought him not a little fame, he decided to break from the newspaper and shift for himself.

Accordingly at the age of twenty-seven he had set up a detective agency, which, oddly enough, became known as "The Samuel Browne." Numerous friends and acquaintances, besides the reputation he had earned as a reporter, brought him clients—many of them. So that he found it necessary to employ assistants—broad-minded, keen-sighted men, who were themselves gifted in the art of ferreting out certain abeyant matters.

The day following the encounter between Campbell and Wetherill, which had resulted in the misunderstanding, Browne received a visitor. It was Joseph Campbell himself, worried as to face, a resignation from life and all its sundry miscalculations looking forth from his despondent eyes.

After the due formalities of greeting were exchanged Campbell, somewhat encouraged by the detective's cordiality, came to the point at once.

"You don't know the worries and misgivings I've had the last three weeks, Mr. Browne," he began. "The suffering I've gone through in such a short space of time is terrible. I've lost my health, strength and happiness. If you know what it is to have your life threatened, and even made an attempt upon, you'll understand the situation."

He stopped to cough, while Browne nodded sympathetically.

"Five years ago," Campbell hurried on, "my brother, Rupert Campbell, came back from the Chinese capital, where he had gone as surveying engineer for an American firm. At my special request he came to live with my daughter and me. He seemed to have plenty of money about him; he spent lavishly, more, I can say, than he possibly could have saved in the entire year he was in the Orient. I won't attempt to tell how much he had, because I do not know. But he had enough to be counted a wealthy man. Once, when I was pressed hard for money which I needed in my business, he lent me six thousand dollars, and seemed to forget about it the next day.

"I was curious to know how he had come by his fortune, and one day I put the question to him. He made a clean breast of what he had done. In some way or other he had stolen several sacred and magnificent gems from the shrine of an idol in a Cantonese temple. He escaped to the consulate, and thence to America. And the money that he had was the proceeds of those gems.

"Of course I repudiated him, but he only laughed. He had no pangs of conscience, he said. He was not living a heathen's life, but his own.

"We managed to keep the secret unknown to my daughter. As time passed we almost forgot about the matter.

"Then, almost a year later, Rupert came to me and showed me a letter he had received. He was in a condition much the same as I am in now—fidgety and anxious. The letter was a threat, signed 'The Six Companies,' and demanded that my brother give up the gems or their equivalent in gold, otherwise the worst would follow.

"Another threat came the next day. It repeated the demands of the first, adding that it would give him thirty days in which to make good his robbery. It was also signed 'The Six Companies.'"

"Yes?" said Browne as Campbell paused.

"I have myself read about The Six Companies," the visitor continued, "but I had never thought that such an association existed outside fiction. From what I had

gathered they are a secret group of Chinamen, headed by influential Orientals, with members in every country on the globe. It seems that the people whom my brother had robbed appealed to them, stating that the religion of the Chinese people had been put to shame by the theft, and in that way China herself had been humiliated.

"Every other day after that there came a warning to Rupert. He grew thinner, weaker, more haggard. He couldn't appeal to the law, because in the eyes of the law he was a criminal himself. Finally, on the tenth day he was gone from the house, leaving a note, in which he said he could not stay in the city while his life was being threatened. Where he went I had no way of knowing.

"Everything went along smoothly after my brother left. No more threatening letters came to the house; that is, no more for the time being. I received no news of his whereabouts in all the four years he's been gone.

"Now, only three weeks ago I was shocked to receive a threat from these same Six Companies, addressed to *me,* mind you, me, Joseph Campbell. You can imagine my astonishment at the time. It was like a thunderbolt out of a clear sky. Of course, to say that I feared would be putting it mildly.

"I realized the situation. You must know, Mr. Browne, that there is a marked family resemblance between my brother and I. He is but one year younger than myself. It seemed very probable, therefore, that the Chinamen had mistaken me for Rupert! Imagine it!"

Again Campbell wiped his brow. He licked his dry lips.

"I was in a quandary. At first I thought I'd appeal to the police, but then I realized that in so doing I'd have to give my brother away, and I refrained. Two days later I received another menacing note. This time my daughter found it, and she demanded an explanation. In order to shield Rupert I told her that I was as much in the dark as she was; that I was evidently being blackmailed. We received several more letters of the same sinister nature.

"Then, last Thursday it was, I suddenly awoke at midnight to find a peculiar odor in the room. What had awakened me I do not know. Probably it was the sheer horror of my dream that had forced me out of sleep. It is lucky I did awake, nevertheless, for if I had continued sleeping I would still be sleeping now."

Campbell smiled grimly, peculiarly, anent the tense, crude irony of his last words. The detective spoke up for the first time.

"Poison gas, do you mean, Mr. Campbell?"

"Yes," was the reply. "And it was of a peculiarly pleasant odor, too. It was almost imperceptible, and I am certain that it alone could not possibly have awakened me. Because of its faintness and queer fragrance it made one breathe in deeply to get a good inhalation. That is exactly what I did, even before I realized it, and the odor seemed pungent and nauseating in my nostrils. I found myself trying hard to keep awake, and before I dozed off I must have dreamed aloud. That was all I knew until I came to consciousness an hour later, with a physician, my daughter, and the two servants at my bedside. By the tears in Betty's eyes—Betty is my daughter—I guessed that I had had a narrow escape, and indeed the doctor told me that very thing himself."

"And you think that the same people who threatened you made this attempt on your life?"

"What else is there to think? No one else would have done it, and surely you can't think that it was an accident. Thank God, I am able to boast that I have none who wish me harm in either my social or business relations. And besides, this poisoned gas smelled much like Chinese incense."

"I see. Tell me something about your servants, Mr. Campbell. Do you rely on them fully?"

Campbell was emphatic.

"Yes. Absolutely! As much as I trust my own daughter, Mr. Browne. They are both women. The maid, Rosa Diminitto, is a small, whimsical girl of eighteen, who knows of the wiles and tricks of the world even less than a five-year-old. The other is

Mrs. Mallory, the housekeeper, somewhat rough in exterior and manner, but withal one of the kindest women I have ever met, with the biggest of hearts, who loves and protects my daughter as she would her very own. No, Mr. Browne, to suspect either of them is ridiculous."

Browne regarded the solicitous Campbell through pert, meditative eyes.

"Have you any of these letters with you at present?" he asked at length.

For answer Joseph Campbell produced a bundle of letters, from which he selected two of the smaller ones. These he gave to the detective.

"They are typical of the rest of them," he said, by way of explanation. "In all I have received eight or ten. The more recent they are, the more intimidating and frightful they become."

Browne noticed that the paper was of yellow contexture, more or less exclusively excellent. The writing in hand was translucent with quick, even strokes. The first letter which he examined bore these words:

"No matter if you roam to the ends of the earth you are in danger. The illustrious gods of China demand that you surrender the stolen gems belonging to them or pay the forfeit.

"THE SIX COMPANIES."

Following this was an odd hieroglyph, which seemed to add a new sinister aspect to the note.

The other letter was much the same, but with an addition that showed the blackmailers to be of great thoroughness:

"If you are prepared to comply with the demand of The Six Companies, put a notice in the advertisement section of the *Bulletin* with the single word 'yes.' Failure to do this will imply a negative, and 'What thou sowest, so shalt thou reap.'"

"This letter was the last before the attempt to murder me was made," said Campbell as he watched the detective put the letters in an inner pocket. "And now I want you to help me."

"I'll do everything in my power," Browne acquiesced. "But first of all, Mr. Campbell, about this brother of yours. You have no idea where he is at present?"

Campbell suddenly sat upright.

"Good Lord, I almost forgot to tell you! I saw my brother only yesterday, but he denied ever having seen me before in this life. He acted cold and distant, too, though he was always jovial and democratic in his nature in the old days."

Browne showed interest. This was the sort of thing that appealed to him.

"How did it happen? Tell me about it."

The man complied.

"I happen to be a member of the Travelers' Club myself," the detective said. "Perhaps I can learn something of him there. To tell the truth, though, I've never heard of any Carson Wetherill being a member of the club."

"And what is to be done in the meantime?" Campbell half pleaded. A trace of the restlessness that had characterized his entrance now returned to him.

"Nothing for the present but to sit still and preserve a rigid exterior," advised Browne, rising. "I'll find out all I can about this Wetherill and trace the paper on which the threats were written. And in the meantime show them you're not afraid. Keep a strict watch, of course. People can't break into modern houses whenever they wish to, Mr. Campbell. In a very short time I'll have a definite course for you to follow."

CHAPTER THREE

WHO IS J. CARSON WETHERILL?

THE Travelers' Club was a fastidious coterie of men, mostly bachelors—the rich adventurer type, the professional globe-trotter, the elderly man who felt himself in the embraces of a second youth, and so forth. It was situated on South Broad street, two blocks from the City Hal, occupying the ground and second floors of a luxuriant skyscraper. It could hardly have been called exclusive itself.

The Travelers' Club was not far from "The Samuel Browne," and the detective walked the distance.

It was several hours after Joseph Campbell had left him, after getting a promise from the detective to pay him a visit in the very near future. In Browne's pocket there reposed Campbell's card.

Arrived at the club, the detective made his way along the heavily carpeted floor to the clerk's desk. He seemed at home here; the florid luxuriousness and spaciousness of the lounging-room, with its scores of torpid idlers, held no terrors for him.

The clerk, a genial chap, recognized Browne at once.

"How do y'do, Mr. Browne. Haven't been here for quite a while, have you?"

"No, I haven't, Williams," Browne acknowledged. "The place looks as pleasant and homelike as before, though. Just dropped in to make sure not to forget it. Enrolled any new members since I was here last?"

Williams nodded.

"Uh-huh! Two of 'em. A strapping young Westerner named Hartmann and an old codger that's so inactive you wouldn't think he came from New York. Name's Schmidt."

Browne concealed his surprise. From the tail of his eye he studied the apparently carefree clerk.

"Williams," he asked suddenly, "ever hear of a fellow named Wetherill? A tall, snobbish sort of chap, he is—the type you might call aristocratic."

A broad smile broke across the clerk's face.

"Know him, Mr. Browne? As well as I know you. Why, he's belonged to the club as long as you have; ever since you quit the *Inquirer* and went in for high-class sleuthing. Don't you know him, Mr. Browne? No? Say, it's certainly funny about that. He calls himself J. Carson Wetherill, though his first name's John. 'John C. Wetherill' sounds too business-like and ordinary, I guess."

Williams laughed again, but this time it was a rather strained manifestation of mirth. Browne's alert ear caught the discord.

"Well, it is queer. I always had the notion that I knew every member here; I mean able to recognize their names at least. And here I find myself mistaken. I confess I never heard that name before spoken in here, nor ever saw the man previous to to-day. Funny, isn't it, how such things can happen?"

"Uh-huh, you said it," Williams acceded. "I'm surprised myself that you don't know him. You're a member here for close to two years, and so is he."

A vestige of faint perturbability had come into the clerk's manner; he seemed annoyed at Browne's persistency. He looked much the same as a small boy does who has spent an hour in the pantry and affirms that he was outdoors at the time. Browne glanced at him surreptitiously; after a while the detective moved away, muttering "Strange, strange," just loud enough to reach the ears of the clerk.

Browne took a seat on a divan and gazed into a newspaper.

He was wondering why the clerk had lied to him. For the thing was impossible; J. Carson Wetherill, whoever he was, had never been a member of the club for well-nigh two years, as the clerk had asserted. The membership list proved that. Wetherill, if that was his right name (Browne strongly doubted it), seemingly had some hidden motive in having it spread that he had been a member of the Travelers' Club for quite a time. And Williams was bribed to spread that impression doubtlessly.

Yet surely both Wetherill and the clerk must have realized that they would be caught in the lie, once it had been circulated among the members. Why, then, had this mysterious Wetherill embarked upon so dangerous a voyage? Certainly their lie would not hold water. Browne confessed himself nonplussed. Yet he was determined to get at the bottom of the affair; in a vague way his intuition told him that the secret of this stranger's identity had something to do with Campbell's case.

He turned to a man near by—a hand-

some, quick-eyed individual—and uttered a greeting. The man turned.

"Why, hello, Browne!" he said cordially. "How are you?"

"Pretty well, thanks," Browne returned. "I'm pretty busy, but I just dropped in anyway because I heard there were several celebrated persons joining the club. Is it true?"

"Yes, it is. I don't know about their being celebrated personages especially, but they're joining—have joined, I should say. There's three of 'em. Some breezy youngster who fell into a fortune because his farm took a notion to spurt oil, a lazy New Yorker, and a fellow who sports an I-own-the-world manner. The snob's name is J. Carson Wetherill."

The detective joined in his wholesome laughter.

"As I understood it," Browne said presently, "this Wetherill is an old member. He's belonged here for two years."

The other thought Browne's misconception worthy of a grin.

"No, old man, you're wrong. Wetherill is new here. Where'd you get that idea, anyway?"

"Oh, so-so," Browne responded lightly. "I guess I'm wrong. But you're sure you never saw him here before—say a week or a month ago?"

"Of course not. How could I if he was just admitted late yesterday afternoon? No, he never was here before, you can bank on that, Browne. If he were I wouldn't have missed him. We always notice people we dislike, and if there's any one I abhor it's a snob."

Convinced now beyond a doubt that the clerk had deliberately lied to him, Browne said good-by and rose to go. But before he had taken a step the other's arm arrested his attention. He turned about inquiringly.

The man motioned his head toward the doorway.

"There's our parvenu now," he said, winking his eye. "Just notice the walk on that baby! Oh, man, if his mamma could see him now!"

Browne looked. It was his first sight of J. Carson Wetherill. As he watched him stalk into the room in a course that would pass the divan upon which they were seated, the detective's mind worked rapidly. He bent down, murmuring into the ear of his acquaintance:

"Do me a favor, old man. I'm after this fellow Wetherill even if I don't know him. No, don't look surprised. Talk as you ordinarily do; pay no attention to him."

The other nodded mutely. He was impressed by Browne's tensity.

Wetherill, as he came past the desk, jerked his head toward the clerk. His manner plainly said: "You fool, look wise. You ought to be glad I'm acknowledging you." He walked on impressively with steps that seemed almost mechanical, holding his high hat on his arm in an up-stage manner.

As he came past the divan something unexpected caught his ear, taking his stoic rigidity by surprise. They were these words:

"How do you do, Rupert Campbell?"

Wetherill turned sharply. The set lips of his mouth parted in astonishment; his features, pallid as they naturally were, now turned to a smudgy, flushed resentment. He glared at the two men below him with a dignified yet more or less wary eye.

"I beg your pardon," said he coldly, "but were you addressing me?"

Inwardly Browne experienced a keen, cursory thrill of gratification. His ruse had worked. While his companion watched the enactment dubiously he came to his feet and held out his hand. A smile kindled in his face.

"Of course, Mr. Campbell. I haven't the honor of knowing you, I regret to admit, but I take the liberty of presenting myself. You see, I know your brother Joseph very well. I must say he is the image of you. He told me——"

Wetherill stared at him angrily, his thin nostrils dilated, his brows suddenly mobile.

"Tut, tut, man," he interrupted. "You don't know what you're saying. My name is not Rupert, nor Campbell, nor anything other than Wetherill—J. Carson Wetherill.

You will be pleased to use that name and that only when addressing me."

Browne started back a step in feigned surprise.

"Mr. Wetherill—the distinguished new club member? Oh, Mr. Wetherill, I beg a thousand pardons. It is really an honor to know you. You look so very much like a friend of mine, you know, who has a brother that strongly resembles him, that I took you to be that brother. My mistake, of course. My name is Samuel Browne."

The detective watched closely, eager to see if the other would recognize the name, but not a flicker crossed the stern face. Wetherill bowed.

"How do you do, Mr. Browne. I am pleased to make your acquaintance. But as to my being new here, there you are mistaken again. I have been a member for quite a time, even though my visits to the club are infrequent."

"Of course, of course," smiled Browne complacently. Instinctively he knew that his friend on the divan would not allow Wetherill's statement to go undisputed, and was even now arising preparatory to an intended argument. With a backward flourish of his hand the detective silenced him.

"And as to this Rupert Campbell," Wetherill said, "I really would not mind knowing him myself. He must be the counterpart of me. Why, Mr. Browne, you are the fifth stranger in two days that has stopped me and taken it for granted that I was this man."

He took out his watch and glanced at it with steeled preciseness.

"However, I must hurry along. I have an affair to attend this evening. I am glad to have made your friendship, Mr. Browne."

The two men shook hand dispassionately. Then, cutting a direct transversal across the plush-like carpets, Wetherill continued on into the interior sanctum of the club. The detective gazed after the upright form, then down at his right hand. His fingers, from the hand-grasp, felt positively cold.

"No, my dear Rupert," he soliloquized, "you're not my friend—yet! I never associate with people whose very breath is chilled wind."

He looked up, to notice the clerk motioning to him from the desk. Williams was pointing to the telephone, and Browne noticed that the receiver was off its hook. He nodded an au revoir to his companion and stepped toward the desk briskly.

"Some woman it is, and she's in a deuce of a hurry!" explained the clerk. "She's crying, too, if I'm not mistaken."

"Hello," called Browne, his tightened lips to the receiver. "What is it?"

"Oh, is that you, Mr. Browne?" a plaintive, tearful voice inquired. "This is Betty Campbell. My father—said—he told you about me. I called at your office, but—but they told me to call here. Oh, Mr. Browne, it is—terrible! My father——"

"Yes?" prompted the detective, after a racking pause punctuated by hysterical sounds.

"Oh, it is horrible—horrible!" Sobs came through the wire. "Will you—hurry over to the house as quickly as—as possible? Please do! My father was—— Oh, Mr. Browne"—the voice suddenly rose to a high tremolo—"my father was stabbed, and he may die!"

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SHADOWS OF DEATH

BROWNE hurried over to the Campbell home with grave misgivings. In his entire career as a private detective never once had its romanticism and novelty been marred by a fatal accident or gruesome tragedy. Though the morbid element was sometimes present, still there had always been a sense of security about everything involved; all his cases had hitherto been merely snag-like, troubled stratums of life, as it were, and nothing more.

But now——

The premonition of something fearful was in his soul—a premonition more sinister than Miss Campbell's words should have caused it to be. Even as he rang the

bell of the ornate house on Walnut street he felt a sinking sensation, which grew more acute as he waited impatiently on the doorstep.

He did not wait long, however. Almost before ten seconds had passed after the jangling echoes of the bell came out to him faintly, the door was pulled open with jarring, spasmodic sound. A girl stood in the doorway—a slender, singularly attractive girl of about twenty, graceful and beautiful, with great luminous eyes that showed traces of tears.

Browne, like any modern young man, had an eye for beauty, but the time did not warrant anything but action. He came into the hallway animatedly, looking at the girl in a business-like, inquiring way.

"I'm Samuel Browne," he told her quickly. "What's happened? You're Miss Campbell, I believe?"

She nodded slowly. Browne saw that she strove hard to keep back the tears. Yet in spite of this they came into her voice when she spoke.

"Yes. My father was attacked while in his room—stabbed cruelly, and—and he hasn't regained consciousness since. The servants and Doctor Joylin are in the room with him. He's still living, but—but I can tell by the doctor's expression——" She stopped, a little catch in her throat. She was on the verge of breaking into tears.

Browne felt compassion for her, and because of that he offered no remark as he followed the girl up the staircase to an interior chamber. To have your dearest friend and relative hovering between life and death, with the chances of recovery slim indeed, that was nerve-racking. In his life he had known the significance of it.

They tread quietly into the room. The atmosphere seemed portentous, oppressive, chilly with a certain sinister knowledge. The breathing of the occupants seemed tenfold louder in the dead stillness. Browne caught sight of the two women in the corner of the room, their breasts heaving, their eyes dimmed. His glance traveled to the physician. The latter pointed silently towards the bed.

In it lay the tall, emaciated frame of Joseph Campbell, covered to the neck with the blanket, his face a chalky white, like a ghastly smear. The breathing, though regular, was faint; the skin about the closed eyelids was lined with creases. Except for a movement of that part of the blanket that covered his breast, indicating life, he certainly gave the impression of being a dead man.

Browne bent over the bed, but he made no attempt to examine the unconscious man. After a time he turned to the doctor.

"Do you think there's any chance?" he whispered.

The physician shook his head dubiously. His voice was also very low.

"There may be a possibility of his recovery, but it's very slim. I might go so far as to say that if he does live it will be nothing short of a miracle. To put the thing in a mathematical light, there is one chance in a thousand."

"Where was the wound made?"

"In the small of his back. The knife, evidently a long, needle-like affair, barely missed the spinal cord, glancing off the backbone. The weapon came dangerously—too dangerously—near the lungs. The jar to the backbone must have numbed the spinal cord, producing unconsciousness."

"H'h! Do you know anything of the why and the wherefore of the matter, doctor?"

"No, I don't. One of the ladies here called me by telephone scarcely half an hour ago, and I hurried over. Mr. Campbell was lying across the bed, face downward. His clothes were slashed by the knife thrust, and there was a dark stain on his back. We undressed him and bandaged his back tightly to stop an upward rush of blood. We used the utmost care putting him to bed. That is all I know."

Browne directed his look towards Betty. She had heard none of the low-toned conversation, and was gazing at the bedridden gray-visaged man with eyes that would not clear. She listened to the detective serenely.

"You were in the house when your father was attacked, weren't you?" he asked in an undertone.

She nodded. "Yes. I was downstairs—in the sitting-room. It is on the first floor front, with the main door facing the hallway. The servants were both in the inner part of the house—in the dining-room or kitchen. I was reading, when of a sudden I heard my father scream. I sat still for some time, shocked into immobility, the thing was so startling. I sprang towards the door then, and as I glanced into the hallway I was just in time to see a small, lithe figure disappear out of the front door. The door remained open; I ran to it and looked out, but I saw nothing of that same figure.

"I ran up the stairs to my father's room—here. Mrs. Malory and Rosa had also heard the shriek, and they followed me. And we made this—this horrible discovery."

Her voice quavered. She buried her face in her hands.

"Would you recognize this intruder again if you saw him?"

"I—don't know. I don't think so."

"Why didn't you call the police?" the physician asked suddenly.

She looked up hastily.

"Oh, I—can't do that. My father made me promise that under no circumstances other than his disappearance or death was I to call in the police. It—it meant his honor. You wouldn't understand, doctor." She turned pensively to Browne. "My father told you everything, didn't he?"

Browne murmured an affirmative. "Did he receive any more letters of the same kind?" he asked.

"Yes, there was one in the mail only this morning. I'll get it for you."

But the detective did not wait until she brought it up to him. He followed her down the stairs. He wanted to question her—to learn more details of the matter without having inquisitive ears within the range of his voice.

In the sitting-room she showed him the letter. The paper was of the same exquisite quality the others had been. The odd hieroglyph at the bottom was also present. The letter read:

"We have given you your chance, and you have failed us. We are prepared to strike!

"THE SIX COMPANIES."

Browne placed the letter in his pocket.

There is no doubt of the sinister intentions of these people," he said. "They are a desperate lot. But tell me, Miss Campbell, how long a time is it since you have seen your Uncle Rupert? He was here on a visit four or five years ago, wasn't he?"

"Yes. And he stayed here with us for quite a time. He suddenly left one day; why I do not know." She paused, as though pondering, then went on:

"Just before he disappeared my father seemed in desperate straits. He grew weaker, just like he did these last three weeks. When I asked him what was wrong he replied his business was poor. And when Uncle Rupert left he immediately grew stronger and healthier. I remember that week distinctly, because it all seemed so vaguely strange."

"Did your uncle appear to be rich at the time of his visit?"

"No. On the contrary, he seemed to be without money. He never went anywhere, as far as I knew. I couldn't understand why he didn't go to work."

Browne was puzzled. This assertation was contrary to that given to him by Joseph Campbell. The latter had said that Rupert was wealthy; Miss Campbell now maintained otherwise. Which of the two was he to believe?

The door now opened. The diminutive maid looked in.

"The doctor would like to see you upstairs, Mr. Browne," she said.

Browne nodded to Miss Campbell cursorily. He went upstairs. Mrs. Malory had gone out; only the three men, one of them so near death, remained. The doctor beckoned Browne to one side; his tone was funereally confidential.

"I've just made another examination," he announced, "and I'm sorry to say that there is not a chance of Mr. Campbell recovering. I would be surprised if he lived more than an hour.

"Now, Mr. Browne, he will not recover consciousness before he goes unless a stimulant be given him. In that case, however, he would not live more than fifteen minutes after the dose was applied. Mr. Campbell may know something that would lead to the apprehension of the criminal, but if this stimulant is not applied he will carry his secret to the grave. What do you advise?"

Browne considered.

"It wouldn't be wise to make the step without consulting Miss Campbell," he said at length. "Are you certain that he will not live?"

"Absolutely! It is against my policy to take so serious a step unless not a whit of doubt remains."

"All right," said Browne, coming to a decision. "I am certain Miss Campbell would acquiesce if she knew that there was not a chance left, but to tell her would break her up. And I am determined to get at the bottom of this thing."

The procedure of applying the stimulant lasted briefly. Browne watched in silence. Presently there was a movement on the bed; Campbell's hand stirred slightly; his eyelids flickered, then opened.

He looked slowly about the room. Recognition came into his wan, drawn face as he caught sight of the detective.

Browne bent over the bed.

"Mr. Campbell, can you understand me? What happened?"

Campbell sighed—a long, drawn-out sigh of resignation. His mouth came open.

"I—lied—to—you, Mr. Browne." The voice was thin—staid. "I—did not—tell —you—the truth. It was—I——"

His head fell back—twisted to one side. The doctor jumped up—stooped over him. He looked at Browne.

"Dead," he announced quietly.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE PAPER CLUE

THE crowd that visited the Travelers' club at night was far greater than that coming in the daytime. From eight or nine in the evening to one and two hours past midnight the club accommodated a comparatively vast throng. The lounging-room in particular bore the brunt of the crowd. The low humdrum that seeped through this enormous room at these nocturnal hours was like the continual drone of a flying bee, never decreasing, never increasing. The air was dense with smoke; the room in general was like a vast black-white panorama.

Three days following the death of Joseph Campbell Detective Samuel Browne came to the club, partly to recuperate from excessive work, partly to think over the facts and enigmas in the mysterious case which the tragic death seemed to have ended.

Browne was not satisfied with work half done. Nothing had been cleared up; the thing still remained a deep mystery. Who J. Carson Wetherill really was, what he was hiding and why, who had killed Campbell, what Campbell had meant when he said on his deathbed that he had lied—all these yet remained to be solved.

Browne had another reason outside of mere curiosity for going on with the case. The spirit of Betty Campbell appealed to him; her hopelessness and woe won his pity. It was not right to break off from the miserable affair for the reason that Joseph Campbell had been murdered. It was not right. His heart rebelled at the sheer thought of it. The vision of Betty, with her appealingly misty eyes, stood before his eyes every time his business sense became dominant.

It was getting on to nine o'clock, and the club was already filed with numerable cordons and coteries. Browne glanced about.

His roving gaze finally alighted on two persons seated about thirty feet from him. They were speaking in low and confidential tones; there was no one within scope of their subdued voices. And they were both persons Browne knew, one of whom held in his hand the skeins of the Joseph Campbell tangle—J. Carson Wetherill and Police Inspector Timothy Driscoll.

He watched them, careful that they would not in turn recognize him. Wether-

ill it was who appeared to be doing most of the talking. His present demeanor could not have been termed exclusive, for he showed a deadly earnestness. Every word of his seemed to carry a ton of importance. Now and then he glanced about to see that no one listened. Several times he leveled an authoritative finger, as though to accentuate the significance of his words.

Inspector Driscoll, too, was a good listener. He seemed impressed. Several times he nodded understandingly. Browne had made the inspector's acquaintance while a reporter.

The detective wondered dimly how such a man as Driscoll, enmeshed in the worldly things of life, could possibly meet up with and remain in the company of such a personage as J. Carson Wetherill.

For probably half an hour the discourse, in all its secretive zealousness, continued unbroken. Once or twice the inspector interrupted and asked something, to which Wetherill replied in a way that seemingly completely satisfied the other. Then Wetherill produced a small white something or other, evidently a card, and handed it to the police official. He added a few more words; then shaking hands stiffly, he arose and sauntered in an all too elegant manner towards the doorway.

Browne now got up from his seat. He moved over to the inspector. The latter was looking at the card that Wetherill had given him, but as he caught sight of some one approaching he dabbed the card towards his pocket. In his haste his arm struck against the side of the chair and the card slipped to the floor.

Quickly he bent down to retrieve it, but Browne was ahead of him. The detective glanced at the card as he rose slowly.

A thrill of joy surged through him, sending an involuntary cry to his lips that he found it hard to suppress. For the card, though of a thicker sort, was precisely the same peculiar and exquisite make of paper on which the threats of revenge had been written to Joseph Campbell by the Six Companies!

He handed the card back to Driscoll with a disarming smile.

"Yours, I believe, inspector?" he asked genially.

"Of course, Browne," Driscoll answered. "Didn't you see me drop it?" He started to say something else, evidently apropos of Browne's curiosity, but the realization of an instruction given him came to his mind, and he shut his lips tightly.

"Guess I'll be movin'," he murmured presently after a pause. "I got work to do." He nodded a bit gruffly, and made for the door.

Browne stood still for a moment in indecision. He had not been able to catch the words on the card, but it had seemed to him, as he had glanced at it, that a blur of Chinese script appeared in one corner. The single word "Restaurant" also had caught his eye. Of a sudden he made up his mind.

His hat was in the cloak-room, and he ordered the boy to get it for him with speed. Turning, he spied the inspector as he disappeared through the doorway.

The immediate surroundings were illumined with the innumerable lights of Broad street. Browne made out his quarry without difficulty. His hat well over his eyes, he followed the inspector as that personage made off in the general direction of City Hall.

He had a notion that Inspector Driscoll was headed for Chinatown. The reason for the officer's going there Browne could not know; he was following him to find out. For the detective knew that, having something to do with Wetherill, it was also connected with the Campbell case.

Inspector Driscoll walked briskly. He passed beneath the arch of City Hall and turned into Market street. With not even the ghost of a suspicion that he was being followed he swerved and moved into Tenth street. They were now but two blocks from the Chinese section of the city.

They turned presently into the dimly lighted, many-alleyed street that sheltered the Chinamen of the metropolis, Browne keeping pace with the inspector fifty furtive yards behind. What light the street did have was given off by the huge sign

over Hop Wu's restaurant, situated near the corner of the block.

This restaurant the inspector entered after glancing at the sign to make certain of something or other.

Browne waited until a minute had passed. In the dim iridescence he glanced up and down the street, noticing the "lay of the land," so to speak. Then he, too, entered the restaurant.

Hop Wu's was but half full, the patrons consisting mainly of those middle-class, every-day people who believe it is the acme of social aggrandizement to visit Chinatown and eat chop suey. Fortunately the entrance was situated in such a way that one entering would hardly be noticed by the diners. Browne took the first seat he came to, and gave the slant-eyed, urbane waiter a casual order. As he looked about him surreptitiously he recognized the inspector, who sat with his back towards Browne, nearer the interior of the chop-house.

Time passed. Browne ate slowly, without relish. He was beginning to fear that Driscoll's coming here had, after all, perhaps nothing to do with the secretive conversation he had had with Wetherill, when he became aware that the police officer was rising. As the detective watched Inspector Driscoll walked unconcernedly towards one of the closed, tapestried compartments. It seemed to Browne that he showed a partiality in his choice of ante-chambers, for he cast a flurried, comprehensive glance along the entire row of them.

Browne experienced a surge of keen exultation. He was on the right track. But it was not until two other men entered that same apartment that the significance of it struck him.

With staid complacency he motioned the waiter and paid his check. Then, as the Chinaman turned, he laid a restraining hand on his arm. The waiter looked at him somewhat bewilderedly, but the expression vanished as Browne winked a slow eyelid and tapped his pocket insinuatingly.

"I've got some money. Do you know where I can get into a little game?"

The Chinaman nodded mutely. Turning, he wormed his way between tables towards the compartment that had seemingly swallowed the inspector and the two subsequent strangers. Browne followed.

The ante-chamber was small, about twenty by ten, and there was a dining table in the centre. Browne, once within, pulled the tapestries together, thus shutting off any outside view, and sat down. He waited a long, oppressive minute.

Suddenly the table gave way beneath his hands, and with a soft, querulous swish-swish, as of velvety springs in action, went to the floor. It was as though the legs of the table had been cut off with neat, mechanical, startling accuracy. Browne sprang up with the suddenness of it, but his surprise was brief, for he had been expecting something of the sort.

The next moment the entire side of the apparently solid wall gave way. A dim light sprang into being, disclosing a hidden, descending stairway.

Browne paused for but an instant. With infinite care he started down the stairs. When he was halfway down the wall above receded; it snapped into place in the compartment.

He became aware of tobacco smoke, of the closeness of trapped air that struck his nostrils unpleasantly. Sounds of voices and laughter came to his ears.

Ahead of him was a large, feebly lighted chamber. Here and there were long, green-covered tables, about which were men and women. No one seemed to take any notice of him. As he moved forward he caught the sounds of numbers being proclaimed, which was followed by an infinitesimal silence, then more noises and laughter. This was Hop Wu's gambling den.

Silently, affecting a nonchalant manner, Browne took a place beside one of the tables. But his mind was not on the little red ball as it spun around the checkered circle. Roulette did not fascinate him. Now and then he looked about him warily. The room was spacious, though dully lighted, and it did not house more than half a hundred people. It should therefore have been comparatively easy to discover Inspector Driscoll if he was in the room.

His eyes lighted up as they traveled to a far corner of the den. There was a small, frail-looking door, evidently an entrance to a side room. Before the door stood three men: Inspector Driscoll, a short, seemingly huddled Chinaman, and—J. Carson Wetherill!

Wetherill was dressed in a tuxedo, as perfectly groomed as the model of a clothing advertisement. He seemed to be pleading with the Chinaman, who was listening patiently to what he had to say. Browne noticed that now and then a glance of understanding passed between Wetherill and the inspector, which entirely escaped the Chinaman.

Wetherill appeared to be playing a part. When he had finished speaking he looked eagerly, expectantly, at the Chinaman, who shook his head slowly. Wetherill watched him extract a key from a pocket and open the small door. The Chinaman turned on the threshold, murmured a few words to Wetherill and the inspector, and then closed the door in their faces.

Wetherill shrugged his shoulders. While Driscoll approached an exit that evidently led to some back alley he lingered near the roulette tables. Browne found it hard to remain undiscovered.

Five minutes went by—ten—fifteen. Then, with a suddenness that was breath-snatching, something happened.

A series of pistol shots were heard, a splintering of solid wood, shouts and curses, screams, an unexpected extinction of the lights, and a shriek that rose above the din and horror of it all:

"The police!"

CHAPTER SIX

THE SOLUTION

BROWNE knew what it meant. It was a raid. And it was Inspector Driscoll, aided perhaps by Wetherill, that had control of its surveillance; there could be no doubt of it.

Impenetrable darkness.

Browne remained by the now-deserted table, his mind working rapidly. Shadows flitted past him, groaning, crying, shouting, cursing, raging, lupine, seething shadows—a medley of trapped human rats. More than one person barely missed crashing into him. The noise of splintering wood giving way before slashing metal now grew much louder.

Like a shooting star, a beacon of light suddenly bounded across the width of the room. Small as it was, it dazzled the eyes that were now used to the reticent, unfathomable blackness. It showed a melodramatic panorama of chaos and frenzy. Browne, quick as he was to spring for the person behind that flashlight, found the other to be even swifter. He could hear, from somewhere above, husky, unblending shouts, gruff commands and voices of abeyance—undoubtedly the police!

The flashlight swerved. It settled its blinding stars upon the small frail door which the Chinaman had traversed scarcely half an hour ago. Browne, plunging forward, saw the tall figure behind it dash for that door; the next moment it gave way before the sturdy frame with a crash. The flashlight, like a pencil of illumination suddenly gone crazy, shot its all-seeing gleam to the right and left as it came to the floor extinct.

The small room was white with glaring radiance. Like a brilliant cascade suddenly released from its bonds, it flooded the gambling den. Browne was over the fallen door into the room in split-second time, leaving behind him the gamblers and the blacklegs as they struggled in the hands of a score of bluecoats.

Gradually Browne's eyes grew used to the tense light. As his orbs ceased blinking they settled on a small, huddled mass that lay full length on the table. It was the Chinaman he had seen enter the room before the raid. The form did not move; the head was slewed to the side in gruesome, fierce horror. The hilt of a knife projected from the breast, while a dark, smudgy blear, like dried blood, was evidence of the murder.

J. Carson Wetherill stood beside the dead

Chinaman, reading a small paper, a thoughtful frown puckering his brow. He looked up as Browne came in, then glanced over the detective's shoulder as though expecting some one else. Browne followed the glance; he saw Inspector Driscoll and a police sergeant entering the room.

The inspector was jovial.

"Worked beautifully," he said, then stopped as he caught sight of Browne. "How'd you get here?" he demanded.

Before Browne could reply Wetherill raised an interpolating hand.

"Never mind that," he said to the inspector. "Mr. Browne was working on a case of my brother's before my brother died, and as this has a lot to do with that matter he couldn't be anywhere else but here. Besides, I knew he'd come when I saw him regarding us so intently at the club."

Browne was genuinely surprised.

"Then you knew I'd follow the inspector?"

"Of course," Wetherill smiled. His aristocratic manner was entirely gone; his mien was good-natured and complaisant. He turned to Driscoll and gave him the small paper he had been reading. "But what do you think of this?"

The inspector read. A frown of perplexity crossed his face.

"Sure gets me," he confessed. "Got somethin' to do with Hop Wu here, huh?" He pointed to the dead Chinaman.

Rupert Campbell, alias J. Carson Wetherill, nodded.

"Yes. But perhaps Mr. Browne here can understand it. You see, inspector, Hop Wu's death is in no way connected with his illicit selling of opium. It is the result of what Chinamen call a tong war—that is, a quarrel between themselves. It had wholly to do with the threats my brother received before he was murdered."

Browne found these words on the paper:

"Know then that he who uses the name of the Six Companies for purposes of evil must meet the consequences.

"THE SIX COMPANIES."

"You see," Rupert Campbell went on to explain, "it was Hop Wu that was persecuting my brother. To make the threats more impressive he signed the name of the Six Companies to them. The Six Companies, as you undoubtedly know, is an influential society of Chinamen who will brook no evil in any matter that even remotely connects them. They found out about this—forgery, you might call it, and—and now Hop Wu is dead."

"I'm not so sure I understand it all," said Browne after a pause. "I know you're Rupert Campbell and not Wetherill, but that's all I do know. There are many things still unexplained."

Rupert Campbell laughed. He took out a card and gave it to the detective.

"That's my real card; no bluff this time," he smiled. "And as to there being many things still unexplained—yes, there is so many of them that I haven't time to give 'em to you now. If you'll meet me to-morrow at the club, say at eight in the evening, I'll guarantee you satisfaction."

Browne looked at the card. It bore these words:

RUPERT CAMPBELL.

"To begin with," said Rupert Campbell the next evening as he and Samuel Browne seated themselves upon the most comfortable divan in the club, "you must know that I have been in the employ of the secret service department at Washington for well-nigh twelve years, and it is against the rule to tell an outsider of that fact. But now I intend to give up this adventurous sort of life and settle myself to some business.

"Five years ago the secret service gave me a somewhat long holiday to recuperate after a strenuous struggle with several international rogues. I came to my brother's home for a visit, but he made me stay almost a year. During that time I kept in constant communication with Washington. About nine months after my arrival my brother came to me and showed me a letter that threatened his life. He confessed to

me that he had, when a youth, stolen some sacred jewels from somewhere in China. It appeared that the people robbed had found him out, and were menacing him.

"I didn't know what advice to give him. And that night I received a wire from Washington ordering me to report at once. So, since we both looked nearly alike, I told my brother to place an account in the papers of Joseph Campbell's visit to Washington. I was well able to take my brother's trouble on my own shoulders. The ruse worked, for my brother telegraphed me in Washington that he was receiving no more threats."

"I see now," said Browne as Rupert Campbell paused, "what your brother meant when he said on his deathbed that he had lied.

"You see, he told me that it was you who had stolen the Chinese gems, and the people who threatened him had mistaken him for you. He even declared you were enormously rich, but his daughter Betty contradicted that lying statement."

"I have no grievance against my brother for that," Campbell said. "But to go on. In Washington I was given a case that has taken me four long years to finish. Yes, Mr. Browne, the same one that had to do with last night.

"You see, there was a nation-wide opium traffic going on; the number of opium addicts had increased alarmingly. It seemed that the opium trade was centered in this city. And I was given the job of running down the opium traffic in the entire country, with but flimsy if any knowledge to start.

"It took me nearly four years to discover that it was Hop Wu in this city that was head of the opium runners. Only last month it was that I made the discovery. I telephoned Washington the information, also proposed this plan: If I could get into the good graces of this Chink, by appearing as a millionaire clubman or something of the sort, and gamble recklessly in his gambling den, then I might accomplish something in the way of uncovering evidence. Washington acceded to this plan; the Travelers' Club was notified that I was to be made out as a member of long standing."

"That explains why the clerk lied to me that day," Browne exclaimed. "Go on, Mr. Campbell."

"There is very little more to tell. I'm afraid I overdid my rôle and appeared snobbish. But I just had to deny my real identity, you see. The order demanded it.

"I visited Hop Wu's underground palace very often, always managed to lose, but nothing other than I. O. U.'s. He inquired, stealthily of course, into the condition of my wealth, and when he learned, thanks to well-laid plans, he sort of took me into his confidence to get as much out of me as possible. But he grew more forceful in his demands for money, too.

"Meanwhile I learned much of his opium running, and with Inspector Driscoll I planned the raid.

"How Hop Wu got hold of the fact that my brother had committed a crime in his youth I do not know, but he used that knowledge as a means of blackmailing him, and eventually murdering him. If Hop Wu would not have used the name of the Six Companies for personal reasons he would not now be dead. But he would be safely lodged in jail, answering a murder charge, anyway. And that, I think, explains everything. Are you satisfied with my explanation, Mr. Browne?"

Browne was. The very next day he started upon a new case. Within a few days he was head over heels in work, and when he bethought himself that Betty Campbell should know how matters stood, that she should be told all, he explained everything in detail to an assistant and sent him over to the Campbell home. He would have liked very much to go himself, but—business was business.

When the assistant returned there was a snicker on his face.

Browne looked up as he entered.

"Well," he asked, "did you tell her everything?"

"Uh-huh," the other nodded, still grinning. "And she said—she said——"

"Well, spill it!"

"She said you were the most incompetent detective she ever saw or heard of!"

Browne slammed down a litter of papers and reached for his hat. The assistant's manifestation of mirth vanished.

"Where you going now, Mr. Browne?"

One hand on the doorknob, the detective turned. He flushed.

"Oh, I'm going to—to straighten things out with Miss Campbell."

"But—all this work to do! Who——"

"Well, this business with Miss Campbell is more important. I'm going to—to——" But the door slammed shut behind him.

FRENCH FEMALE CONVICTS

FRENCH female prisoners and convicts are treated with more kindness, on the whole, than persons of their class are in England. Their matrons and wardesses are Augustine nuns, whose rule, though firm, is gentler, more merciful, and more steadfastly equitable than that of laywomen could be. The female convicts are allowed the same privilege as the men in the matter of earning money and buying things at the canteen; those of them who are young also enjoy a privilege not granted to female convicts in other countries—that of having husbands provided for them by the State—only those husbands must be convicts. Every six months a notice is circulated in the female penitentiaries, calling upon all women who feel minded to go out to New Caledonia and be married, to make an application to that effect through the governor. Elderly women are always very prompt in making such applications; but they are not entertained. The matrimonial candidates must be young and exempt from physical infirmities. Girls under long sentences readily catch at this method of escaping from the intolerable tedium of prison life, and the pretty ones are certain to be put on the governor's list, no matter how frightful may be the crimes for which they have been sentenced. The only moral qualification is to have passed at least two years in the penitentiary. The selected candidates have to sign engagements, promising to marry convicts, and to settle in New Caledonia for the remainder of their lives. On these conditions the government transports them, gives them a decent outfit, and a ticket-of-leave when they land at Noumea. Their marriages are arranged for them by the governor of the colony, who has a selection of well-behaved convicts ready for them to choose from; and each girl may consult her own fancy within certain limits, for the proportion of marriageable men to women is about three to one. Of course, if a girl declares that none of the aspirant bridegrooms submitted to her inspection have met with her approval, the governor can only shrug his shoulders in the usual French way. It has happened more than once that pretty girls have been wooed by wardens, free settlers, or time-expired soldiers and sailors, instead of convicts. In such cases the governor can assent to a marriage only on condition that the female convict's free lover shall place himself in the position of ticket-of-leave man, and undertake never to leave the colony. Love works wonders; and there is no record of a man having refused to comply with these conditions when he had fallen in love.

The Tricks of Counterfeiters

AS many people have been victimized by counterfeiters, an exposure of their methods puts the average man on his guard against accepting spurious money.

Counterfeiting has its fads and fashions and its good and bad seasons. During the war there was a minimum of counterfeiting of all kinds. The high price of metals discouraged the coin counterfeiters. Recently the somewhat lower price of metals has led to a slight increase in coin counterfeiting, although there has been for the last two or three years, and still is, comparatively little of it about New York. There is gradually coming to be what the Secret Service calls a "normal circulation" of counterfeit coins. A number of new issues of counterfeit bills have appeared during the last year. The raised bills have increased in by far the largest proportion.

The bills particularly chosen by the "profession" for raising are the Federal reserve $1, $2, $5 and $10 notes. As raised bills are redeemed by the Treasury Department at their original value when discovered in possession of an innocent party, the unwary stand liable to lose the difference between that and the falsely inflated face value, as a jeweler who accepted for a diamond ring two $500 bills raised from $100's discovered to his sorrow.

Although the Federal reserve bills lend themselves to manipulation, they also carry on their face an extremely simple means of detection, in the portraits of notable Americans which they bear. Washington appears on the $1, Jefferson on the $2, Lincoln on the $5, Jackson on the $10 and Cleveland on the $20. These lesser bills are the ones most frequently raised, consequently the shopkeeper who keeps in mind the fact that no Federal reserve bill bearing the portrait of Washington or Jefferson is worth more than $1 or $2, respectively, may save himself some deficits. This characteristic arrangement of the portraits is not true of other bills.

The detection of counterfeit coins is not always so simple. The old-fashioned method of throwing them on the counter is no longer available, as most of the new counterfeits "ring true." Peculiarities in appearance, thickness, weight are the only tests. Frequently the milling is irregular or imperfect. The most common imitations are of dimes, quarters and half-dollars. The scarcity of silver dollars in circulation through the East makes the passing of counterfeit dollars difficult. The dime is losing its popularity with counterfeiters along with its lessened purchasing power.

One sentence seldom cures a counterfeiter. He always thinks he will be more clever another time. The law fixes a maximum punishment of ten years for coin counterfeiting, and of fifteen years for note raising. Since note raising requires no plant, presses, dies and the like, and leaves no traces or evidence behind, it is considered by the department and the law makers the more dangerous form of falsifying the currency. Counterfeiting either of coins or paper is more laborious and requires greater skill. Not a few of the regular addicts to the business have served eight or ten terms.

The second or third attempt to counterfeit after a term or two is so common as to be almost the rule.

In one respect the counterfeiters and bill raisers hold to custom. They still cash in on their labors by buying articles of small price and receiving genuine coin in change. The regular passers work in teams, one passing, the other carrying. In case the passer is apprehended no telltale evidence is to be found on his person; he has always just received the counterfeit money in change from some unknown source.

The Wind-Burner

by

Hamilton Craigie

CHAPTER ONE

A MAN, tall and broad, slouch-hatted, moving with the peculiar, springy step of an athlete in training, mounted the long stairs leading to the platform of the suburban station of North Pelham, New York. Detective Dennison was a fine figure of a man in the pale fall sunshine as he stood a moment on the station platform, the ghost of a smile on his keen, good-humored countenance.

For the detective had reason to smile, or rather, two reasons, and these were:

To-day was the first day of his long-deferred vacation, the first he had had in several years, in fact. And, second, across his vest there lay a length of ornate gold chain, attached thereto, but hidden in a pocket, the finest watch that money had been able to buy. It was the gift of his brother officers in the department. He was going to the city now, but not to report; there was a boat leaving for Havana at six; the detective had the tickets in his pocket.

The evening previous Vinson, sergeant of detectives at headquarters in the city, had rallied him.

"Oh, Denny!" he had called, as the latter was leaving the station preparatory to the long trip homeward to the suburbs. "Better *watch* your step, son! It'd certainly be a downright sin for some light-fingered dip to frisk you for that kettle, I'll tell a man!"

Detective Dennison had never heard of "poetic justice," but if he had had time to think of a retort he might have considered that it would be turning the tables, at any rate, with a vengeance if some particularly daring crook succeeded in picking the pocket of the man who had been the arch-nemesis of every crook, strong-arm, hoister, pennyweighter, and "gun" in the metropolis.

But it never would happen. And so——

Detective Dennison was a trifle early; his train would not be along for several minutes; meanwhile, strolling along the platform, his attention had been drawn to a train of heavy Pullmans, windows down. It stood silent now, without its engine, but in the distance Dennison could see the electric locomotive that was to take it the rest of the way to Grand Central. Presently, with a jarring rumble, the great engine was coupled on. There followed the long blast of the whistle as the detective, idling along the platform, paused a moment before the darkened windows of a heavy coach. It

was a private car, by the look of it, some tired multimillionaire, doubtless, returning from *his* vacation at the Thousand Islands or the Adirondacks, following the call city-ward of his stocks and bonds.

With a last premonitory blast from the whistle the wheels began to turn; the heavy train was moving out. It was a warm day, but the windows of this particular car were down, Dennison noticed—that was a trifle odd if he had considered the matter—and then, as the long train gathered headway, crashing over the switch-points, there came a startling interruption.

The detective had been standing rather close to the platform's edge. Now, as the train began to pick up, that private car was passing him. In a moment it would be gone. Of a sudden a window shot upward with the speed of light and there came a tug at Dennison's vest, the glimpse of a long, hairy arm and hand. The detective, scarce aware of what had happened, stared in sheer, voiceless amaze after that retreating train, then downward to where but a split second before that ornate chain had glistened in the sun on his vest.

Still speechless, realization struck him like a blow.

The chain, and with it the watch, had vanished!

Detective Dennison was not the man, however, to stand biting his fingernails in a futile chagrin. To say that the loss of his watch had not disturbed him would be less than the truth. He had had it scarcely longer than a day, and it was an extremely valuable one. But the blow to his pride was almost a knock-out. And it would never do to let it leak out; even now in imagination he was hearing the voice of Vinson and of the rest:

"Well, well! Detective Dennison, Old 'Speed' Dennison, robbed; pocket picked in broad daylight; must be getting old—well, too bad, too bad."

It mattered little that they would have said nothing of the sort. Jerry Dennison on the eve of his first vacation in years had had his pocket picked, and by a cheap "heel," probably—a third-class dip. It was too much! Although what such an individual would be doing in a private car, unless perhaps it had been a porter who had done it, Dennison could not imagine.

But the detective was not the man to waste his time, as many another would have done, in futile anger. His train, an accommodation; it would be worse than useless to wait for it. He had the long platform to himself, save at the head of the long flight leading downward to the street a man in jumper and overalls, who, as the plainclothesman came up at a plunging run, answered Dennison's quick question with

"Yep—th' Limited, straight through to Grand Central, sir, an' she's late now."

But the plainclothesman was out of hearing. In a lightning flash, even as he went down those steps to the street, he was sifting his mind for possible clues to the man who might have committed that affront against the dignity of the department as exemplified in the person of Detective Dennison.

He knew the crooks, and he was fairly certain that the dextrous hand that had filched that watch and chain did not belong to any one who knew him.

But for the moment the man had made his get-away clean.

The Grand Central was his only hope, for, once there and with none to stop him, the thief would just disappear, lost as a needle is lost in a haystack, and, to all intents and purposes, lost for all time, as far as Detective Dennison was concerned. Unless——

The detective could have phoned ahead, but there were at least two reasons why he dismissed the idea even while he thought of it. The flying seconds, burning the wind indeed while that train roared southward and his pride. He would lose precious minutes while telephoning; besides, to confess that he, Detective Denison, had had his pocket picked was unthinkable.

Now, hurdling the final flight downward to the street with the agility of a boy, the plainclothesman landed on the running-board of a taxi standing at the curb, its driver bent over the wheel, dreaming doubtless of fat fares and easy pickings. He

came to life with a jerk, however, at the detectives's advent.

"Grand Central, and burn the wind; get me, Tony?" was Dennison's order to the rat-faced chauffeur.

The latter, broad awake from a standing start, so to speak, nodded. He knew Dennison; there was nothing more to be said.

The car was a powerful one; fifty miles in the hour would be asking an easy performance of it. On two wheels it swung outward to the roadway, roared down the graveled runway under the trestle, the motor rising to a swift thunder as the car, like a leased thunderbolt, soared for a moment between sky and roadway, where that long white ribbon dipped downward under the hill.

Above the purring of that motor, its eighty horses pulling now with a smooth, easy, effortless rhythm, there came the voice of the driver:

"That train, boss, she wait twenty minute at th' draw on Harlem River. We catch her easy at Forty-second."

But Dennison was not so sure. There might be an accident. Even as this thought obtruded down the long road a car was coming northward; abruptly, broadside on, it swung sidewise with a grinding of the brake.

There was barely room for clearance; the road, wet with a late rain, gave treacherous traction. Dennison held his breath. But that car and its driver, moving as one, swerved, a hair's-breadth, and with a swift, plunging rush they were past.

Dennison grinned as a cat grins, without mirth. One of those meetings would be enough, and more than enough. And then a traffic man at a four corners sprang suddenly to view, hand raised. Even at that distance the plainclothesman fancied he could see the hard eye, the truculent mouth.

As the taxi roared downward upon the man in uniform Dennison, leaning far out, extended his shield, the sun winking on the metal as the officer stepped forward, then back again with a wave of the hand and a quick, understanding nod.

Southward, ever southward, fled the car. They would make it, he told himself. But now, as the woods-road gave way to asphalted streets, houses, traffic, in an increasing tide, brought down their speed by less to less.

Then at a turn of the long avenue they saw the drawbridge, like a giant spider, straddling the oily river, and in the near distance a fleet of barges, sluggish, slow.

Downward past that drawbridge the road ran, curving in a great crescent to another bridge, and toward this second bridge the taxi drove as the chauffeur, turning, spoke out of the corner of his mouth:

"We've made it, chief. The draw's wide open, and there's the train!"

It was true. The plainclothesman, turning his head, saw that train, and he saw, too, that, flanking the giant draw, a wooded hill ran upward, climbing to craggy heights northward along the land. Twisting and turning like a snake, a road ran, looped perilously along that cliff-face. That would be a dangerous way, he thought, as the taxi roared onward across the bridge.

Now, as a swift power-boat drives through crested seas, the driver held on, cleaving the traffic with a skill and caution that brought from Dennison a quick

"Good work, Tony!"

And presently, sliding through the stream at Forty-third street, the taxi, halting at the platform, the plainclothesman, leaping from it with a back-flung word, ran down the long ramp inward to the gates.

A word to the man on duty, and the detective, standing a little to one side, watched now, as a hawk watches, for that disgorging stream of passengers. He had made it by an eyelash. The train had but that moment entered the station, the first of the passengers filtering outward now in twos and threes. Then, of a sudden, for the first time since the purloining of that watch and chain, Detective Dennison swore one single, explosive oath.

What was there to look for? He had, after all, seen merely a hairy hand, flashing, sinuous as the darting paw of a jungle beast, and that was all! And it is somewhat difficult, even for a trained man-hunter, to

identify a hand. That hand had been seen only in a fugitive eyeflash for the tenth part of a second, and then was withdrawn even as he looked.

Helpless, he could only stand, glowering, as the descending passengers came outward, dispersing atoms in a sea of fellow-atoms, to the four winds. After all, he had no absolute assurance that the thief was not at that very moment passing him, insolent, assured. Even now, chuckling in his sleeve, he might be crossing that glittering rotunda outward to the street.

But Dennison found himself, notwithstanding, watching those varied hands as they came outward through the gate. He was remembering one salient fact, etched upon his memory, and then for the moment, in the rush and roar of the taxi's flight, forgotten.

That hand had not been *white*. It had been different! He knew now that he would look and look for it in this crowd and never see it, because its owner would keep it hidden out of sight. Or, at any rate, Dennison thought that he would. For the owner of that hand would be cunning, with the cunning of a fox. And by the same token the plainclothesman felt certain that somewhere between North Pelham and the terminus the thief had escaped.

To make assurance doubly sure the detective went inward now, along the platform, looking for that private car. And here he drew a blank with the information that the car had been uncoupled. It was somewhere "out there in the yard," a wiper had told him vaguely, gesturing along the maze of tracks.

But time pressed. Dennison, anyway, was fairly certain that his "hunch" was a good one. Notwithstanding that it had been a private car, it was a pickpocket, and a trained one, who had snatched, with a deft, thrusting gesture, that watch and chain.

The thief was gone, lost, but by the same token Dennison had found his clue when he questioned a yardman about the occupants of that car.

CHAPTER TWO

GOING out to the taxi, Dennison gave the driver an address, at which the man's eyes bulged out in sudden disbelief.

"Honest, boss?" he asked, his grim mouth turning upward at the corners. For the address which the detective had given him had been a strange one—odd, anyway, under the circumstances. The plainclothesman's answer left little room for doubt:

"Honest is right!" snapped Dennison. And then, half to himself and to the driver, as the car was turning the corner into the avenue: "Well, what do you know about that?" he murmured, subsiding into his seat.

The day was yet young. After all, if he worked fast, he would be able to use the tickets in his pocket. His boat was not leaving until night, and, if his luck held, he was certain that by evening he would be on his way, his watch and chain restored, his reputation unsullied, everything serene once more. Which was as it should be.

But at the address which he had given he received his second check.

It was a grim, gray building, set, solitary, in Central Park. Strange noises came from it, weird indeed, if you had not known them for what they were. The grim-faced man who met him at the door could only tell him:

"No, sir, they are not here. We shipped two of 'em out this morning, but I'm certain they're not the ones you want, either of 'em. No, mister"—and his face had worn a strange, almost an accusing look—"you're out of luck!"

There had been a look in the man's eye which said, plain as if he had spoken the words:

"*You're* crazy!"

But the plainclothesman did not waste time in idle speculation. He had drawn a blank indeed, but the evidence, as he had seen it, was strong.

Boys were crying an extra as the taxi whirled outward to a broad avenue lined with tall trees. Dennison crooked a finger and got a paper on a sudden impulse; then,

as the headlines met his eye, he grinned, turning to the driver with a crisp word:

"Hammerstein's."

This time Dennison's destination was a main-traveled thoroughfare, but a short distance away from the city's famous street of song and story. And here, if his luck held, he would find that which he sought.

Dennison's shield won him a ready admittance into the theatre. A walk down a long hall, a blundering in semi-darkness, and a room brightly lighted. It had a queer smell, even above the drifting fumes from the pipe in the mouth of a husky individual who met him with a lifting swagger.

There was no doubt about it; the man had imbibed, not wisely but too well. The plainclothesman eyed him with a strong disgust.

"Did you just come in on the train?" he asked, displaying his shield.

"Yes," the man shrugged; then he turned a watery eye upon the detective. "A cop, eh? Well, I thought so," he said resignedly. "I'll come with you, all right. But I tell you, mister, it ain't a bit of use—no use at all. It's my partner you're after, and he has beat it. I guess I know where he went to, as some one tipped me off."

"Lead me to him," said the detective briefly.

Into the golden afternoon the detective and the man with the pipe went to the waiting taxi. It sped off as they boarded it along the avenue north, and ever northward, matching its speed against the wind, indeed burning the wind. Mile upon long mile the city fell away behind. Their road ran high above the river, flanking that giant draw Dennison had met, climbing to craggy heights northward along the land. Twisting and turning, that road ran, looped perilously along the cliff-face; it was a dangerous way indeed; how dangerous they were presently to discover.

Abruptly, mounting a long rise, the man with the pipe gave a sudden exclamation:

"Look there!" he called in a harsh whisper.

Ahead of them, a mere speck against that white ribbon of roadway, bending and turning, as it seemed, against the clouds, they saw a small black dot. It seemed to move no faster than the minute hand of a watch.

"It's him—th' Wind-burner!" cried the man with the pipe. "Darn his hide! I tell you, mister, he's a slick one, but we've got him now! If he suspects we're after him, it's all off. I trusted him, mister, and this is what I get for it. Oh, he's a slick one, I can tell you! But we'll put him behind the bars, or my name ain't Honest John Bendigo."

But that black speck appeared to grow no larger. Dennison turned to the man with the pipe:

"Well, it's up to you. You're certain he's got the watch?" he asked.

"Certain-sure, officer," answered the man, pipe fixed firmly between his broken teeth. "I saw it, back there near that drawbridge, but when I had my back turned for a moment he was gone. And the train had started then; there wasn't anything I could do. I was goin' after him when you came into the theatre a while ago! I tell you he's th' slickest bird in the business. He must have lifted the watch while I was takin' forty winks in the car. Then, darn his hide, he must have known that I'd get wise sooner or later, after we'd reported for work. So he hops out of the car by the drawbridge while my back was turned, ducked into the woods, and the first bicycle he saw he hopped out of the bushes and grabbed it. And that's *him* ahead; you can gamble on it."

"He likes wheels?" asked Dennison. It seemed to him that that speck had grown a little larger; the taxi, at its greatest speed, lurched now from side to side with the staccato explosions of its motor driven to its highest notch.

"*Likes* 'em?" answered Honest John Bendigo. "He has wheels in his head, sir! That's why we call him 'The Wind-burner.' Honest, mister, if he'd go *straight*, I wouldn't be surprised if he could ride rings round Kramer and those birds. But you just can't trust him, sir! And slick—you see, the jasper that was with him before trained him to pick pockets when he was just a little fella. It come natural to him, I guess; he's never got over it. Him an'

me—we've been partners a long time, but I can see where it's all off now. Well, he's got it comin'."

The taxi, driven to the extreme limit of its speed, had seemed to be gaining, and then, even as they watched, the black dot far ahead appeared to dwindle, to recede; then abruptly it disappeared, as if the earth had opened and swallowed it.

"Lord!" burst from the man with the pipe. "Poor Joe! He's a goner, sir! You can't see it from here, but I've been over this road before, and there's an excavation just ahead. We'll come to it in a minute. And th' Wind-burner—Joe—it'd be just like him to ride plumb into it, hell-bent for election!"

It would be too much to say that Detective Dennison did not at that moment think of his watch, but the thought of that broken body, lying there, hurled, in a moment of time, into eternity sickened him. He narrowed his gaze now with a sudden, swift concern.

The creature had taken his watch. He deserved to be punished, if indeed he was responsible. But, after all, was he responsible?

The plainclothesman peered now, craning his neck, as the taxi halted at the edge of a wide gap in the road. He looked, then looked again, stifling a quick word in his throat. Then, with a leap, followed by the man with the pipe, he was beside that still figure lying in the dust, the bicycle crumpled, some distance away, where that headlong plunge had driven it.

"He's alive, and, I'll gamble on it, he's only stunned!" exclaimed Honest John Bendigo. And as if to prove his words the Wind-burner chose that moment to rise, propping himself on one arm. His mouth opened, he shook his head from side to side, then, lurching a trifle, he got slowly to his feet.

Bendigo made a sudden start and his arm shot out.

"Joe's O. K., sir, and here's your watch. It seems to be all right, mister. But it sure was one wild ride while it lasted. Well——"

He turned, his hand upon the wrist of the Wind-burner.

"Come on now, Joe, old fellow," he said softly.

And in that instant Detective Dennison knew that his "hunch" had proved to be the right one. That dark, hairy hand had suggested, first, the visit to the menagerie in the park. It was natural enough that he should have thought of that. Then the sight of those headlines in the newspaper with the photograph mentioning Joe's coming to the theatre. Dennison smiled grimly now as the *great performing ape,* head sunk upon his chest, eyes averted in an almost human acknowledgment of guilt, moved stiffly to obey.

FINGER-PRINTING PREVENTS FRAUDS

EIGHTEEN months of finger-printing of postal savings depositors has proven a decided success against fraud, and the system will be continued, according to the Post Office Department.

Federal postal officials report that the criminal suggestion connected with making the finger-prints has been virtually wiped out and that the method is almost universally popular, even on New York's East Side and with the denizens of the South Side in Chicago.

The foreign population, which shied at the finger-printing at first, has been won over, postal authorities say, through learning that their savings are safer.

In the old days, when Guiseppe Guillermo affixed his mark—not being able to write his name—to a saving deposit, he had no way of knowing but that some pseudo Guiseppe would come along later and make the mark and walk out with the money.

Now the foreigners look upon the finger-printing with pride.

A Detective's Skill

THE skill of detectives is shown in various ways. Some are specialists in certain lines of work, and although many of the commoner methods are followed by the general run of sleuths, the man who specializes usually gets wonderful results. There is one type, the officer who memorizes faces, who always wins a modicum of success.

Detectives call it the "portrait parler"—the science of recognizing a fugitive from justice by a description, or arresting a man whom they have never seen by the trick of memorizing his characteristic features. Sometimes it is called the "camera eye," but that applies more to a memory of faces these men have actually seen. To the plain citizen it seems an uncanny skill that some policemen possess, yet it is said we all have the faculty in some degree.

Experts in the business of identification claim no unusual powers. If they have talents the rest of us do not possess it is rather the cultivated habit of careful observation. They become so unconsciously absorbed in their work that they notice every person they see for his general characteristics and little distinctions of both physique and manner.

They point out that Nature has an inexhaustible number of combinations with her limited material of eyes, nose, mouth, head, trunk, legs and arms. Yet no two are exactly alike. The photographic eye merely registers this difference and files it away in a trained brain. It discards all the other details as superfluous.

Women are especially adept in identifying persons by their clothing—especially other women. They notice details of dress that a man overlooks and can even identify the gown at sight when it is worn by any other woman. There are, of course, thousands of men with a limp in the right leg and millions with prominent gold teeth. The search for such merely means that all those without such characteristics can be passed by. But every man with such marks is subjected to further scrutiny.

It is also possible that there is more than one man in the world, for instance, who limps in his right leg, has blue eyes, is deaf in his left ear, has brown hair, stands six feet three inches and has a wart on his nose. This is where the identification ceases to be merely superficial and becomes scientific. If there are photographs of the man in existence these are carefully compared with the man under suspicion. Outsiders who know the man sought are called on for identification.

Even then there are often possibilities of doubt.

The man called upon to identify another in a criminal case is notoriously untrustworthy. Usually he was much excited when he saw the crime committed and usually he is nervous when called upon to identify a suspect. More than one man has gone to prison through the error of such identifications.

It is here that the thumbprint proves its value. It is said that, so far as is known, no two of these are the same. But the fault in this system is that unless the suspect is a criminal there is no record in this form under our present laws.

But if there is no thumbprint there may be a Bertillon measurement of the man, and with this, it is asserted, there is no possible question of doubt. It is the last and final proof.

Usually, however, the pursuit does not go this far. The process of elimination is quickly followed by other positive identification, confession or circumstantial proof of identity that leaves no room for doubt in the minds of the jurors.

The Ring That Chattered

By PETER PERRY

PART I

CHAPTER ONE

THE Adam Gale house stood in a walled enclosure overgrown with tropical plants and unkempt palms, whose long, curving branches drooped to the ground. No pretenses were made any longer of keeping up the gardens that had been so carefully and elaborately planted, and their luxuriant tropical growth had transformed the grounds into another Eden, beautiful, uncared-for, brilliant with the crimson of geraniums and purple bougainvillea, and fragrant with heavy, sweet, exotic perfumes. Only the little patch of lawn around the house was kept trim now, and the spreading wilderness was gradually encroaching upon that.

The old place occupied an entire block on South Figueroa street, which was the most fashionable part of Los Angeles twenty years ago. The huge, rambling wooden structure had been built about that time, and Adam Gale had bought it a few years later when, having accumulated a fortune in South America and other parts of the world, he returned to his native land and settled down, a respected, still young, and much-sought-after bachelor. He was a romantic figure. It was rumored that he owned silver mines in South America, but beyond that little was known of his past, except that he had been an adventurer and wanderer.

For ten years he lived alone with his servants in the mansion. The fashionable part of Los Angeles moved north and westward. The Gale house grew old and weatherbeaten, and the grounds neglected. Adam Gale grew older, too, and was neglected. Then at fifty he married a girl of seventeen, a pretty little stenographer whom he had dazzled by his wealth and experience.

Los Angeles recovered from the shock, and the younger generation growing up had forgotten the existence of the once popular bachelor, while the older generation wondered vaguely if the old house on Figueroa street was vacant or occupied. Then the name of Adam Gale startled Los Angeles again. He had been murdered.

His younger half-brother, Paul Gale, who was connected with a firm of brokers and who made his home in a moderately expensive apartment hotel, was the one on whom suspicion fell. He had quarreled frequently with his older brother. He was in love avowedly with his brother's wife, Ruth Gale, still a girl in her twenties.

CHAPTER TWO

ON the last night of Adam Gale's existence he, with two of his old-time friends, Logan and Dix, and his half-brother, Paul, had spent an evening at poker in Gale's study—or "den," as he called it—a small room back of the library. On the floor above Ruth Gale listened eagerly for the sound of her lover's voice. Adam, knowing the state of affairs between them, seemed to take a malicious delight in bringing them so close together, and yet keeping them apart. He had forbidden them to see each other, and yet he frequently invited Paul to the house. He possessed in a marked degree that antagonism which age feels for usurping youth, and every year he became more jealous and cautious and proud of his young wife. He gloated over his possession.

"Paul shan't have you till I'm gone, and I'm good for another twenty years. I'm in the prime of life, my dear." And he would thump himself resoundingly and throw out his chest and strut around the room. "And you won't get a divorce from me, my dear. I've got you and I'm going to keep you." And he took good care that she had no grounds for divorce. "Pine your heart away for Paul if you are so foolish, but don't let me hear of you meeting him anywhere." Thus he tormented the two. He made no secret of the matter.

Ruth, tiptoeing about in the bedroom above, knew from the tone of Adam's voice that he was railing satirically at Paul's infatuation and impotence. She knew that Paul, flushed and hot with resentment, was biting his lip to keep from breaking out against his older brother. She knew from Adam's high, broken treble notes of merriment that he was winning and Paul losing. She stole into Adam's room adjoining her own, hoping to hear some word of Paul's, or only the sound of his voice. She knew that he must be conscious of her presence, that he must hear her steps overhead, light though they were.

"You needn't be looking. She isn't coming down, Paul," Adam taunted.

But Paul did not reply.

Moving softly across Adam's room, Ruth passed before the old mahogany chest of drawers which stood between the two windows, and her slight movement started a vibration of one of the metal handles. They were old-fashioned drawer-pulls—rings held by a little claw at the top, and one of them, which had become slightly loose in its clasp at the top, vibrated and clattered against the metal base when disturbed by the slightest jar. Ruth, annoyed by its chatter, lifted it up. She knew by experience which it was—the one on the left of the second drawer. Presently it fell of its own accord and began its occasional temperamental chatter again as she crossed the floor. She crept back to her own room, waiting for the time when her husband's guests would leave and Paul could come to stand in the darkness below her window for a few whispered words and to catch the fluttering note she would drop down to him. She turned out the light that she might watch without being seen, and knelt before an open window, waiting.

Shortly after midnight she heard the men leaving. They crossed the wide veranda and stood on the steps discussing points of the game. She smelt the smoke of their cigars wafted up to her. Adam was with them. She wondered how Paul could elude his watchfulness. She wondered if Adam would accompany them to the gate. Paul was not talking; he was strangely silent. But presently he broke in on the others harshly:

"Come back in with me, Adam. I want to talk to you."

She heard Adam's shrill merriment and his good-nights to his guests, and she heard him follow Paul back into the house. Paul slammed the door. Logan and Dix were left alone on the steps.

"Hadn't we better hang around a bit? The youngster's wrought up. I'm afraid of trouble," Logan ventured.

"Tut, tut! They're always quarreling," Dix rumbled. "Let 'em quarrel. Don't get mixed up in family rows."

And the two men sauntered down between the long rows of overhanging palms to the gate.

Ruth waited by the window. She heard the brothers' low, angry voices, but no hint of their words reached her ears. Adam was not laughing or scoffing now. She was glad that Paul was not afraid of the older man, as he sometimes seemed to be when he sat accepting and enduring his taunts in silence. It was as he had said—it was only through silence that he could keep control of himself. He was aroused now. She could hear the quick, vibrant notes of his voice. He was threatening Adam. They were quarreling about her.

Her position was intolerable. Adam's sly perception had discovered the state of affairs that existed between her and Paul almost before they were aware of it themselves. And lacking the courage of revolt, she had submitted for two years to the petty malevolence and harassments to which Adam subjected her by way of punishment,

And daily he grew more bitter in his rancor. She wished it could be settled some way.

CHAPTER THREE

THEN Paul came out alone. Softly he crossed the lawn and stood beneath her window.

"Darling," he whispered tensely.

"Paul!"

"I've had it out with him, Ruth!"

She was listening apprehensively for Adam's step on the stair. He might come up at any minute.

"We can't go on this way, Paul. There must be some way out," she pleaded, "besides—besides *that.*"

"There is!" he breathed exultantly. "I'm glad you wouldn't come with me now—because——"

"Tell me—what is it?" she queried, sensing the excitement in his tone.

"No—no I can't—not now. You wait and see!" he finished triumphantly. "Give me the note; I must go now," he added almost impatiently.

She dropped the note to him, and it sailed out gently, twisting and twirling in the darkness. He caught it before it touched the earth, and then he disappeared in the shrubbery.

Ruth turned away happily and lit the shaded light by her bed, filling the room with its soft glow. She began to undress in the dim light. Adam had not come upstairs yet. It was not unusual. He was a light sleeper and often shut himself up in his small study, reading and smoking till nearly morning. She hoped he would tonight. She did not want to see him now. She closed the door between their rooms.

She thought she heard his voice downstairs. There was no one for him to talk to; the servants were gone. None of them slept in the house, the few there were having quarters over the garage. She stood there in her nightdress listening. Everything was quiet.

But suddenly a terrible hoarse shriek seemed to fill the whole night. She had never heard anything like it. She could not believe it was human. She stood transfixed, terrified into silence, holding her breath. There followed a choking, gurgling cough and a groan.

Ruth rushed to the window and, flinging it open, shouted at the top of her voice for Paul. He could not have gone very far; he was walking home. She kept crying out in a panic of fear till she was breathless. She sank exhausted and trembling by the window. Every nerve of her body was quivering. She wanted to go downstairs, but she could not. It was like some horrible dream. There was silence now—utter quiet, even more terrible.

Then in the stillness there came a faint chattering, a metallic clinking. It was the ring vibrating spasmodically with the footfalls of—— Ruth wondered if it were Adam. She was afraid to call. She pulled herself up, leaning against the wall for support. She reached for her dressing gown on a chair and drew it around her shoulders. She looked about for a weapon. There was nothing—nothing.

The ring still chattered faintly. The sound would hardly have been noticeable in the daytime. But in the silence of the night its tapping, its soft monotony became significant; it seemed to be warning her, to be signaling some message of danger, the presence of some one moving stealthily in Adam's room. Ruth crouched against the wall, afraid to move. The seconds seemed interminable.

Then the knob of the door between her room and Adam's turned noiselessly. Ruth saw the glimmer of its nickeled surface reflecting the light as it moved uncannily, turned by an unseen hand. She saw it move slowly, cautiously, the wrong way, and then back noiselessly.

She fled blindly out through her door into the hall and down the stairs, her arm flung up to shield her eyes, rushing headlong, stumbling, hurrying.

Some one was pounding on the front door loudly, clamorously. It was a relief to hear a bold, natural racket after the nerve-torturing tapping in Adam's room.

She hurried to open the door. And even as she turned the knob she heard Paul's voice calling to her:

"Ruth, Ruth, are you hurt,"

She jerked open the door. Paul took her in his arms.

"What is it? What's happened?"

"He's killed; I know it," she gasped. "I heard—oh, there's some one upstairs. No, no; don't go—not up there!" She held him back as he started for the stairs. "He's—he's in there." She pointed to the study, turning her head away.

"I'll see what's happened. You wait here," he commanded.

Paul went through the library and into the study. She heard an exclamation, almost a scream, escape his lips. She closed her eyes and waited.

CHAPTER FOUR

TWO men came running up the walk, their feet striking heavily on the bricks and clattering on the wooden steps. Short, little Moto, the house boy and gardener, followed by a big, blue-coated officer, burst into the house. Moto, uttering broken, excited exclamations to his companion, stopped short in his chatter and stood staring.

Ruth turned. In the library door stood Paul, white as paste, and there was blood on his hands and on his shirt front. The officer eyed him coldly and stepped to the telephone.

"Police call. Hurry."

He gave his communication in a few terse phrases without removing his glance from Paul, who stood white and swaying in the doorway. Hanging up the receiver, he seized Paul by the arm and drew him back into the study.

"It's murder—murder," Paul repeated hoarsely.

Ruth followed fearfully. Paul, the officer and Moto were bending over something on the floor. It was Adam, lying on his back, very still and quiet. She could see his feet, his black, patent-leather shoes, his immaculately creased gray trousers, resting there on the rumpled Turkish rug on the other side of the table. She could not see any more. Moto came stumbling out, fleeing from the sight.

"Don't leave the house," the officer called after him. Then he began firing rapid, staccato questions at Paul. "How long ago was this discovered?"

"Not two minutes."

"Who found him?"

"I did."

"Like this?"

"On his side—crumpled up."

"You ought not to have moved him."

"I wanted to see if there was life. I couldn't believe he was dead."

"Remember anything you say may be used against you," the officer warned him coldly.

"But I——"

"How did you get that blood on you?"

"I leaned over him to see if I could hear his heart beating?"

"You didn't see the weapon?"

"No."

"I'll have to search you."

Ruth heard a slight clatter overhead, which escaped the notice of the men.

"I heard some one upstairs," she called to the officer. "I heard—— Oh, go quick!"

"Don't try to leave the place," the officer warned Paul.

"I'm coming, too!" Paul dashed for the stairway, and the officer followed, pausing only long enough to lock the door of the study, putting the key in his pocket.

Ruth heard them running up the stairs and through the bedrooms above.

In the hall was a little group of frightened, excited servants and a few neighbors, who had been aroused by Ruth's screams. They divided themselves into search parties and spread through the grounds, armed with clubs and hoes and anything that would serve as a weapon. Ruth heard them beating the shrubbery and palms and calling to each other in their excitement.

She crossed the hall, afraid to remain by herself in the library confronted by the locked door. In the living-room a few coals

were still glowing in the grate. She threw herself down on the couch, burying her head in the soft pillows.

CHAPTER FIVE

AFTER a time the officer and Paul descended the stairs. They had found nothing. The coroner and two detectives came.

Again the study was entered, and again the men came out and the door was locked. Again they went over the house. Then Ruth heard them in the hall upstairs. The coroner spoke curtly to Paul:

"Step in here. I want to ask you a few questions."

They went into Adam's room.

She aroused herself from her lethargy and ran up the steps. She must tell them that Paul was innocent, that he had not even been in the house, that she had called him back. One of the detectives stopped her outside the door.

"You can't go in there now."

"But I must; I must!"

"It'll be your turn next," he replied grimly.

She was forced to wait.

It was ten minutes before the coroner opened the door and Paul came out. The coroner did not seem satisfied. He motioned for Ruth to enter the room.

He asked many questions. He made her tell everything she knew: that Paul had come to her window, that she had given him a letter, and the words that had passed between them.

He showed her the letter; he had taken it from Paul.

"Is this the letter you wrote?"

She nodded, blushing that her innocent little note had fallen into strange hands.

"How long did you talk with Paul Gale?"

"Ten minutes perhaps."

"How long was it from the time he left you until you heard the scream?"

"It must have been five minutes; I had undressed."

"How do you account for the fact that he was still within calling distance?"

"I don't know; it—it might not have been that long." Ruth wavered, feeling somehow that Paul was being trapped. And then, with an inspiration: "He might have stopped to read my letter—by a street light. He does sometimes," she confessed nervously.

"So he says. Your stories agree very nicely," the coroner mused a little ironically. "And he was outside trying to get in when you came down?"

"Yes."

"There is a night-latch on the door, I believe. It was not locked from the inside with a key. If Gale went out and closed the door it would be locked."

"But he didn't do it; he didn't," she cried out against the unjust accusation. "You suspect him! You are trying to make a case out against him! You are unjust! I tell you I heard some one in this room. I heard him walking about. I saw the doorknob turning. He was coming into my room, and then I ran."

The coroner listened coolly until her vehemence had exhausted itself.

"Are you sure you heard some one walking in here?" he asked her. "This rug is very soft. An ordinary step would hardly be audible in the next room." He rose and paced noiselessly up and down the thick-piled rug which covered the floor.

Ruth turned to show him the ring that had warned her.

"Why, it's gone!" she exclaimed. "It was there before, and now it's gone!"

She ran over to the chest of drawers that stood between the two windows. The ring on the left of the second drawer was missing. It had slipped or been wrenched from the little claw that held it at the top. The base was still fastened to the drawer, only the ring itself was gone.

"It always chattered when any one moved in the room. It rattled against the base. I heard it when I was in my room," she explained to the astonished coroner. "There was some one in here; *there was!*" she repeated triumphantly.

"It sounds plausible," he admitted. "When did you see the ring last?"

"When I was in here, while they were playing downstairs. I lifted it up because it annoyed me."

"Has anything else been disturbed?"

Ruth looked around the room.

"I don't think so," she replied.

The coroner opened and closed the drawers of the chiffonier, inspecting them hurriedly. Everything was in order.

"Did your husband keep any valuables in his room, or in the house?"

"No; nothing of unusual value."

"Do you know any one who was an enemy of your husband, who would have desired his death?" he asked, watching her narrowly, "except his brother?" he added suddenly.

"Paul didn't do it," she returned hotly.

"You didn't answer my question."

"He hadn't any enemies."

"What did Paul Gale quarrel with your husband about this evening?" he demanded.

So he had found that out, too.

"I didn't hear," she faltered.

"Be careful," he warned.

"I didn't hear any words."

"But they were quarreling, after the others had left?"

"Yes."

"They had quarreled before—about you?"

"Yes," she admitted miserably.

"That will be all for this time, Mrs. Gale." He rose decisively, opening the door for her. "Remember, you are not to leave the place." He ushered her out. "Where is that Jap?" he inquired of the officer who had come first.

"I'll get him, sir," the man replied.

CHAPTER SIX

RUTH went into her room. She was too puzzled and worried to feel exhausted now. She sat down in the armchair before her desk, pressing her hands against her temples, trying to solve the puzzle of the missing ring. The coroner evidently had not considered it a matter of much importance. They were intent on building up a case against Paul; they would arrest him; they would try him for murder.

Ruth knew that the ring had been there before; it had been held securely in the grip of the little claw. It was loose, but it could not have fallen or slipped out. It would have taken some strength to pry it loose, and why should any one go to that trouble? By merely lifting it up it could be kept from rattling.

For what utter reason could any one have wanted the drawer-pull? If the murderer's fingers had left a stain of blood on the ring it would have been wiped clean in a second. To what use could it be put? She must find some reason for its being gone—some connection with the crime—if she wanted to save Paul.

The officer came back and reported that Moto had disappeared. The coroner was angry. She heard them talking in the hall. She was glad that they had found somebody else to share their suspicion. But she did not think it had been Moto; he had been too plainly grieved at the sight of his master's body. It was unusual for an Oriental to show so much feeling. She put the thought of Moto aside.

She began dressing herself quickly and calmly. Her hysteria had passed and her brain become cool and clear now. She felt the necessity for action—for saving Paul.

As soon as the officers left Adam's room she went in again. She searched the floor carefully in case the ring had been dropped, but there was no sign of it. She tried the other handles on the chest of drawers. It would have been impossible for her to pull one out with her fingers. Only an unusually strong man could have loosened one without a tool. And there were no marks to show that the missing ring had been pried loose. There were no scratches on the metal base or on the wood, and the little claw that held it had not been lifted or bent upwards; it had given only enough for the ring to slip out. It must have been

pulled or jerked out. It would have to be pulled downwards. But why?

Ruth felt that the clue, the only tangible proof she had of the murderer's presence in that room, was only leading her into a stone wall. She examined carefully the surface of the drawer around the ring's base. There were no fingerprints visible to the naked eye, no blood, no stains, no scratches—nothing to mar its fine, dark polish. And then she noticed that the front edge of the chiffonier, a foot below the ring, had been disfigured by a slight blemish. For the space of two inches the mahogany surface had been rubbed white. She was sure the scar had not been there before. It was only the very edge; it was as if something had been drawn across it and around the corner of the chiffonier.

Then suddenly she saw how the ring had been pulled loose! A rope had been fastened to it; the murderer had escaped through the window at the left. The friction of the rope had caused the blemish on the corner of the chiffonier. The ring had pulled out. There had been a fall probably, but the man must have escaped uninjured.

She wondered why he had come upstairs. Had it been to silence her? Or to look for valuables? Or was it because Paul was already at the front door? Had he intended to escape that way, or had he been forced to? Had he brought the rope with him? Or had he—— She looked around the room. What could he have used? It was then she noticed that the extension cord which reached from the centre light to Adam's bed was gone. There had been perhaps twelve feet of the wire. The globe and shade were on the table by his bed. It was queer, she thought, that she had not missed the cord before.

She felt a thrill of elation. It was not much, perhaps, to work on—a drawer handle and twelve feet of green silk cord; they might be on the grass outside. But they were tangible, solid things. She felt a sense of relief in their materialism. They lent reality to the mystery of the murderer who had vanished so completely in an almost ghostly manner.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SHE hurried downstairs in search of Paul, stopping only to take the little automatic pistol Adam kept in his room, thrusting it in the pocket of her sweater. She found Paul and drew him into a corner while she told him eagerly of her discoveries. She did not want to confide in the officers in charge; they were so coldly certain of themselves and their opinions; they cast doubt and discredit on her own.

"We must look outside. We must hurry; we may find something else. Here, take this." She slipped the automatic into his hand.

Paul followed her willingly. They passed out of the house unmolested and unnoticed, but down the long drive in the moonlight they saw a pliceman guarding the iron gates, which had been closed.

They discovered nothing beneath the windows of Adam's room. The close-cut grass of the lawn which stretched to the wall of the house gave no traces or signs of what had passed over it. They could see little in the dim light. And beyond the patch of lawn the shrubbery and palms lay hidden in deep shadows.

"We can do absolutely nothing now, I am afraid," Paul admitted with disappointment.

"But out there—a dozen men could hide in that thicket," she cried, urging him on. "In the morning it may be too late. They may take you to jail in the morning," she whispered.

She saw the muscles tighten under his coat sleeve and knew he was gripping the pistol in his pocket.

"You are right," he said. "Now is the time to search. But you must go back to the house."

"No," she protested.

"It might be dangerous. And then you must tell them that I am searching the grounds. Tell them I shall not leave the place. They must know where I am; otherwise—you see——"

"I'll tell them," she submitted.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE officers were disturbed over the fact that Moto was missing. Their suspicions were directed against him now rather than Paul. Ruth told them that Paul was searching, but would not leave the grounds.

"He can't," one answered meaningly.

Then they began questioning her about Moto, his character, the length of his service, his people, but she could tell them little. He had been with Adam Gale before they were married; how long she did not know.

From their conversation and questions she learned more details of the tragedy. Adam's watch had been taken. If the motive had been robbery the murderer had been frightened away before he could obtain other plunder; a diamond ring was undisturbed on the victim's finger. He had been stabbed in the left side, by some one facing him, perhaps. No trace of the weapon had been found. All the downstairs windows had been fastened. There seemed no way of entrance except by the front door. One officer vouchsafed to another that it was an "inside job."

CHAPTER NINE

AS the night faded into the early gray light of dawn the report of a pistol shot resounded ominously through the grounds of Adam Gale's place. Those waiting and watching in the house heard it but faintly, but the effect on strained nerves was as much a shock as an explosion. Another hurried search was made through the shrubbery and tangled undergrowth. But nothing was found.

Then the policeman who had been guarding the gates came running in breathless.

"I found him—he's stabbed, too."

Ruth heard the words and shuddered. She remembered that she had urged him to go.

After interminable minutes they brought him in, stretching him out on the couch in the living-room. It was Paul, unconscious and stabbed in the shoulder and breast.

"Suicide," one detective nodded wisely.

"Getting too hot for him," the other agreed.

Ruth was tearing the shirt away from the wound. She knew he was not dead—he could not be—it was only his right shoulder.

He revived miraculously under her touch. He tried to raise himself up on his elbow, but the exertion caused the wounds to open more. She made him lie back again on the pillows. His eyes sought the coroner.

"He limped—I saw him limping—sprained ankle," he explained weakly. "I got him in the arm—small fellow—slight build."

Then he closed his eyes again in pain.

An ambulance, hastily summoned, bore him swiftly to St. Vincent's. A surgeon pronounced the wounds not dangerous.

(*Continued in our next issue.*)

MILLIONS IN BLACKMAIL

THE average person has no conception of the vast amount of money obtained by those despicable crooks, the blackmailers. When a person strays from the path of rectitude, and an unprincipled crook learns the facts, he proceeds to bleed his victim for all he can. Blackmail is one of the commonest crimes, and it is estimated that their loot equals that of the most skillful highwaymen, pickpockets and burglars.

If all the cases that occur were promptly reported to the police, there would be more arrests for this particular crime, and less misery for the victims. Unfortunately most of those people upon whom the blackmailer preys if guilty dare not make the matter public, and consequently have no redress. There is no class of criminals in the world more despised, and no class that the police prefer to arrest, more than these parasites. Records of the courts show a singular absence of blackmail cases in comparison with other offenses. But when these malefactors are caught and are brought to justice, they usually receive the extreme limit of the law.

Hair In Crime Detection

THE police departments of various cities in the United States are classifying a knowledge of human and animal hair to solve crime mysteries. They have made microscopic studies of thousands of specimens of different kinds to determine the distinctive characteristics of each sample.

Experts in this particular line of endeavor find the hair to be of immense value in determining the personal habits of the suspected man, the condition of his health, his approximate age and the contour of his features. Under magnification hair which is frequently cut is smooth and unbroken, while that which is seldom trimmed has frayed ends. Human hair is separated into different types, according to the width of the pith, medulla and cortex or the outside layer under the scales. The part of the body from which the hair is taken is judged by its coarseness. The heaviest hair comes from the eyebrows, mustache or beard. Detective experts have found that hair from the eyelashes, backs of hands and arms, scalp or nose are finer than the other. Children and females do not have as coarse hair as men, and fine downy hair comes from very young children and babies. The medulla in a child's hair is not united as it is in the hair of an older person, and the end of a hair from the face of a man who shaves or trims his beard shows that it is cut on a bias. There is a vast difference in the appearance of the pith of hair taken from an animal. It is composed of small, separate segments, whereas human hair has elongated strips of pith. The police data on the subject of this pith is often a determining factor in the line of evidence of a crime. The pigment or coloring matter frequently shows the age of the person.

Crime problems have frequently been solved by the police upon a photomicrographic examination of the hair, not only here but in France, where this is a special line of investigation. The study of hair was recently taken up by the police of England, who have made an exhaustive study of it to judge temperament and character.

Profusion of hair is an indication of a nervous constitution in man or woman. Insane persons tend to produce copious hair, and idiots are frequently provided with an extraordinary quantity. People of an ardent emotional nature are almost always vigorous in hair growth. According to Doctor Furneaux Jordan no long-haired woman is ever shrewish in disposition. Fine down on a woman's face denotes a warmth of emotion.

Thinness of hair in both sexes is accompanied by such mental and emotional traits as a tendency to domination, comparative coldness in love, practicality, deficient imagination and an indifference to art. Women who have curly hair are seldom bad-tempered or unkind. Criminal offenders among women have often very abundant hair. A man with crisp, coarse hair is usually more muscular than intelligent.

Male and female villains in dramas and novels are generally dark-haired. There is no necessary connection between fair tresses and virtue. Some of the most dangerous women criminals are golden-haired, and the matron of a reformatory for children stated that the majority of refractory girls have fair hair.

Red or auburn-haired persons are often impulsive, excitable and quick-tempered. Brahmins were not allowed to marry women with red hair.

Very delicate, silky hair has a great esthetic charm, but the fine-haired woman is not invariably soft-hearted. Fine hair is not the healthiest hair, and it is frequently scanty.

The Third Course

by Frederic W. Johnston

CHAPTER ONE

"YOU keep saying that it's simple, Mr. Crane," said Ballard impatiently. "But it isn't simple. There's nothing simple about it."

They were sitting in the dark, handsome library of Crane's house on Highland avenue. The great clock in the hall had just boomed eleven in deep, musical tones. On the speaker's high-bred face was a mounting flush of annoyance, but his host, a plump little man with ruddy cheeks and shrewd, calm eyes, seemed the embodiment of suavity unperturbed.

"I think," he responded quietly, "if you look the plan over you'll admit that it is the simplest thing in the world." His eyebrows lifted slightly as he added: "An assistant cashier has access to the vault, hasn't he?"

"Of course."

"Well, then, just think how easy it is. Some time to-morrow you slip in and get a package of a hundred thousand dollars in Liberty Bonds that Mr. Robert Stillings left with the bank last week as security for a loan."

"You seem to know a great deal about it."

"I'm a broker. Knowing things is a regular part of my business. For example, I know that Stillings used the money to buy stock in the Fidelity Oil Company, and that he has gone to Palm Beach with his family for the winter. So it'll be three or four months before the loss is discovered. You'll leave a dummy package, of course. And when it's opened, some time next spring, nobody will have the slightest idea as to who took the bonds or when they were taken. As a broker it will be easy enough for me to turn them into cash without leaving any trace. That will be my risk naturally. And you will be making $50,000 by a trick that you can turn in five minutes. Don't you call that simple?"

"No," said Ballard wearily, "I don't." There was a look of something like sadness in his dark eyes. Then he added, in an odd low tone, almost as if it were an afterthought: "It is never a simple thing for a man who has been going straight all his life to begin going crooked."

Crane met this with a silence that seemed to flow from him, filling the room, subjecting everything in it to a kind of pressure. At last he spoke again:

"And have you been going straight all your life? Is that what you mean?"

"Precisely." The look of sadness had deepened, but the tone was clear and firm. "That is just what I meant."

"Oh," said Crane courteously. "My mistake." He took out a cigarette, lighted it and, as he shook the match, added: "By the way, Mr. Ballard, have you ever been in Minneapolis?"

The effect of the simple question was like an explosion in the dark. Ballard went white to the lips. Every fibre in his taut body seemed to proclaim that the shot had gone home. Yet when he spoke his voice was as steady as before.

"Yes," he said. "I've been there. Why do you ask?"

"Oh, for no reason in particular," Crane replied in a peculiar tone that gave the lie to his words. "I was there myself about ten years ago on a business trip. A Mr. Pembroke Warren wanted to consult me about a bond issue. I went to his house, of course. And while I was there I happened to see a boy named Bentley, who was working for Warren as a kind of secretary. A few weeks later I saw by the papers that Bentley was wanted by the police. He had forged Warren's name to a check for ten thousand dollars, cashed it at the bank, and disappeared. There was a great hue and cry, of course, but as I remember it, he was never caught. I can't help wondering if you ever happened to hear of him." He stopped speaking as if to wait for an answer, but none came.

"I can't help wondering also," Crane went on, "whether you are still ready to insist that you have kept to the straight and narrow path ever since you were born."

"Yes, I am."

"You're perfectly sure about it?"

"Yes, perfectly," said Ballard. "I think, though," he added in rather a wistful tone, "that I had better tell you just what happened. Perhaps you will understand."

For a long moment he stared with unseeing eyes at the floor before him, and then went heavily on:

"I was nineteen. All my life I had lived in a little town up near the Canadian border. But there was no opening there, so I came to Minneapolis and persuaded Mr. Warren to give me a job. It looked like a pretty good thing for me. Mr. Warren had a secretary named Joyce, and I was to be Joyce's assistant. I suppose it would be impossible for me to tell you what Joyce was really like. I only knew that he appeared wonderful to me. He was a pale, statuesque sort of man, exquisitely clean-cut and slender, and fastidious to the tips of his fingers. He had a way of dressing that made other people's clothes seem dowdy, and a way of talking that made other people's speech seem crude. Even in finance I got the impression that he knew more than Mr. Warren.

"He was very kind to me, too, telling me where to get my hair cut, and how to buy my clothes, and what to do with my knife and fork at the table. Of course I thought him the salt of the earth. So, when he explained that I was to learn to imitate Mr. Warren's signature and thus save him the trouble of making out checks, I did as he said. It seemed a bit strange, to be sure. But Minneapolis was full of strange things to me. I had never seen a taxicab or a trolley car before in all my life. And, besides, Mr. Warren had told me I was there to take Joyce's orders. So I took this one, saying never a word.

"The plan went off without a hitch. One day, when Mr. Warren was in Duluth, Joyce had me make out a check for ten thousand dollars, in Mr. Warren's handwriting and signed with Mr. Warren's name. Then, still obeying orders, I went to the bank and cashed it. Of course they knew me there. When I gave Joyce the money he took out a hundred and said: 'Here, this is for you. You'd better take a little vacation—two weeks, say. You've certainly earned it.'

"I went to Chicago. All my life I had wanted to see the stockyards and the Auditorium and the boulevard. And I wasn't disappointed, either; it was great while it lasted. Then the blow fell. Mr. Warren, coming home suddenly, asked at the bank for his balance, and the fat was in the fire. My name appeared everywhere in staring headlines. Joyce had disappeared, of course; and, young and green as I was, I

knew that without his word to support my story I was lost. So I changed my name and my lodgings and got work in a coal-yard. You know what a man looks like with coaldust ground into his face and sifted through his hair and eyebrows. In three days my own mother wouldn't have recognized me. And, besides, the work itself was a kind of disguise. The police weren't looking for a laboring man.

"After six months it seemed as if the air had cleared. Other crimes had been committed and other fugitives were being sought by the police. So I threw up my job, washed my face and hands, and came East. It was rather hard sledding at first. For a while I thought I was going to starve. But at last I met Mr. Franklin. He took a fancy to me and gave me work at the bank, and I've been there ever since. You know the rest."

For a time the little broker sat in a thoughtful silence, puffing at his cigarette and eyeing each whiff of smoke as it rose and spread upon the air. His brooding seemed to take a skeptical turn, for he remarked at the end:

"It's a pretty good story, and it holds water as well as most stories do. But do you think a jury would believe it?"

"I know they wouldn't. That's why I have been lying low all these years."

"What," asked Crane again after another pause, "do you suppose would happen if you got found out?"

"That's too easy. I'd be arrested at once and taken to Minneapolis and tried there. The jury would bring in a verdict of guilty almost without leaving the box, and the judge would send me up to Stillwater for five or six years. There are some things you can't be certain of in this world, but this thing is as sure as death and taxes."

The time had come for Crane to strike, and he struck like a cobra.

"In that case," he said blandly, "I don't see how you can very well afford to turn down my offer."

So far as appearances went the thinly veiled threat had no effect upon Ballard except that he seemed to have grown suddenly very tired. There was also this to be noticed, that he kept wetting his lips with his tongue as he turned his melancholy eyes on his tempter in a long and brooding stare.

"Oh, so that's it," he said wearily at last. "You've got me between the devil and the deep sea, and you think it's on the cards that I shall choose the former. However," he went on, with a slight stiffening of tone and manner, "figures of speech won't get us anywhere. The thing to do is to come out into the open and state the case in plain terms. As I understand it, Mr. Crane, I must either go in with you on this scheme of yours or else start for the West to-morrow with a pair of handcuffs on my wrists, and every chance I've got in life ruined forever. Is that the idea?"

"Something like that."

Again there was a silent pause as Ballard stopped to turn it over. When he spoke next it was evident that he was looking at the matter from a new angle.

"I think you mentioned in the beginning that your plan was simple. I'm ready to agree with you now that it's all of that and a whole lot more. And the simplest thing about it is that I am to take all the risk, while you get half the money."

"Not at all," Crane retorted in rather a curt tone. "If anything went wrong we'd both be tarred with the same stick."

"Oh, no we wouldn't," said Ballard. "You're far too shrewd for that. If anything went wrong they'd put me on trial for embezzlement and send for you to come and testify against me. I can just see you sitting in the witness-box telling the jury a pitiful tale of how I have fleeced you, taking your honest money in payment for stolen bonds. And I can see the papers coming out with a list of my victims and your name leading all the rest. I was nineteen once," he added with sudden bitterness, "but I'm not nineteen now."

The broker smiled a quiet little smile that was not altogether pleasant to behold.

"That seems pretty clear," he conceded. "Evidently you have got the thing sized up so well that you know just where I stand. The great question is, though, whether you are shrewd enough to see exactly what your position is."

"I flatter myself that I am," was the blunt reply as Ballard rose to his feet and began to pace the floor. Crane watched him intently. There was a subtle something in the poise of the straight, lithe figure that filled the smaller man with the beginnings of a vague disquiet. Furtively his right hand sought the pocket of his smoking jacket, and there came in contact with a metallic object that was hard and cold to the touch. Again Ballard began speaking.

"As I see it," he said, "there are three courses open to me."

At the word "three" an anxious, puzzled look came quickly into the broker's eyes, but he said nothing.

"In the first place," Ballard went on, "I could go back to Minneapolis and take my medicine. I'm afraid, though, that that would be almost too hard a dose to swallow. Even a man who has never been near a jail can make a rough guess as to what prison life is like. And as a banker I am in a position to know the sort of thing a convict faces when he gets out. So we may just as well agree to put course number one into the discard. It is frankly unthinkable."

Crane nodded his head in silent approval. His hand was still in the pocket of his smoking-jacket.

"Secondly," Ballard continued without pausing in his stride, "I might do as you say, take the bonds and turn them over to you in exchange for half their value. But I'm afraid I couldn't stomach that either. What happened ten years ago was just a boy's mistake. This would be a real crime. And when it was over you'd have me in the hollow of your hand. All my life I'd have to come when you called, dance when you fiddled, perform any dirty trick you chose to ask for, while you sat by looking on with clean hands. And in the end they'd get me. I'd make some slip and they'd come and take me up and put me where I belonged. No," he shook his head, "I can't do it. I've gone straight all my life, and I'm not going to begin being a thief now. So," he added in a tone of curt finality, "we'll have to dismiss course number two also. It is simply out of the question.

"As for course number three," he went on, without appearing to notice the peculiar watchful look that had come into Crane's eyes, "I might as well admit that I don't like it. In fact, if you were to call it a bit disgusting you wouldn't be very far out. And though the Minnesota authorities wouldn't lose any sleep over it, it would make the police of this State very wide awake indeed. Still, ugly as it is and dangerous, too, it looks a shade better to me than either of the others. And so, in spite of the risk and the ugliness, I'm afraid I shall have to take it, after all. The third course, Mr. Crane," he concluded in a voice strangely tense and low, "is just this."

As he spoke he whipped out an automatic pistol from his pocket and pointed it straight at the other's breast. But the broker was not to be caught napping. With the quickness of light his own weapon was drawn, raised and leveled. And thus the two triggers were pressed at exactly the same instant, so that only a single report crashed out upon the quiet midnight air.

In the ominous hush that followed Ballard stood irresolute, stupefied, groping. Then, little by little, he grew vaguely conscious that he was doing several things at once. He was staring down upon his enemy, watching the light fade from the startled eyes, the ruddy color in the cheeks turn to gray as the finger of death touched them. He was also listening intently for the tread of hurrying steps on the stairs, for the frantic ringing of the bell, for some indication that the shots had been heard and an alarm raised. But there was no sound except the clatter of Crane's pistol as it fell from his dying hand upon the polished floor.

Then, his mind caught in the sudden grip of a fresh question, Ballard turned to scan the wall before which he had been standing. But the tinted plaster showed no dent or break in its beautiful surface. Up above, however, near the ceiling, was a small ventilator, and seeing this he nodded. Somewhere behind that painted iron grill was the bullet whose wind had fanned him as it sped past his temple.

Again turning, he went over to the table and picked up his hat and a book that was lying there. The book was a copy of "Mid-

dlemarch," which he had been reading in the car on his way out. With a quick, bird-like motion of his head he glanced about the room. There was no use, he reflected, in trying to cover his tracks now. Surely the record of his visit would be found written everywhere so plainly that even the stupidest policeman would be able to read it. And, though he had been admitted by the broker himself, some one would be found who had seen him come in and some one else would be found who had seen him leave. The case was open and shut. So far as the police were concerned, it was all over but the shouting.

Without further ado he crossed to the door and went out into the hall. There a fresh surprise awaited him. The library was at the back of the house. As he turned to go forward he saw a man standing at the front door, with his back to Ballard, peering out through the glass toward the street. Evidently the intruder's ear caught the sound of steps behind him, for suddenly he swung around, presenting a face covered to the eyes with a black handkerchief and a hand bearing a pistol, which, without a moment's hesitation, he raised and fired. Involuntarily Ballard's left hand came up, bringing the book against his breast as the weapon in his right hand responded. There ensued a breathless interval of waiting. Then, with a clutching movement that tore the mask from his face, the burglar sank slowly backward and measured his length upon the floor.

Dazed by the suddenness of it all, Ballard stared stupidly at the book in his hand. The bullet intended for him had gone through the cover of "Middlemarch" and buried itself in the leaves. Then, again starting forward, he became conscious of a feeling that, for him, all contact with the realities of life was at an end. And this impression deepened as, for the second time that night, he stood looking down into the face of a dying man. Unfortunately even the briefest scrutiny was enough to force upon him an unforgettable picture of mottled leaden cheeks and glazing eyes, from which he drew back with a sudden gesture of weariness and disgust. Again he stopped to listen for the sound of footsteps on the floor above. But the silence was still unbroken. Again he glanced about him, thinking of the many signs that would be left of all that had occurred. And then at last, with a final shrug of his shoulders at the way life had beaten him, he turned to the door, opened it, and was gone.

CHAPTER TWO

THE next day was the strangest in James Ballard's life. The savor of unreality seemed to impregnate the very food he ate, the very air he breathed. And the most unreal thing of all was a certain astonishing keenness and grasp with which he approached his work. Never had he been so valuable a servant of the bank as on this day, when each moment was lived tremulously through in the expectation that the next would be that of his arrest.

Shortly after ten Mr. Franklin passed his desk with a kindly nod and a smile. But Ballard hardly noticed the president. At the moment he had eyes only for a large, beefy man who stood in deep thought near the paying teller's window, pondering some course of action. But the beefy one, as it turned out, decided upon nothing more alarming than to cash a check and take his departure.

In the course of the morning the same little tragi-comedy was performed over and over again. Twenty times Ballard found himself staring at some shabby coat, wondering if a detective's shield was pinned on the vest beneath. But the end was ever the same. It was always a false alarm. And so, when one o'clock came, the sword not yet having fallen, he put on his hat and coat and went out to lunch.

He sought his favorite restaurant and ordered the dishes he liked best, with the perfect assurance that this would be his last meal as a free man. When the food came he rather dawdled over it. Any thought of haste was clearly out of the question for one who sat face to face with a shadowy figure of doom. As a result he rose from

the table much later than usual, and found, on reaching the street, that the afternoon papers were already being sold.

In the twinkling of an eye he had bought one and was scanning its columns in search of the item he dreaded. At first it evaded him. For a moment there appeared to be nothing but the usual grist of strikes, politics, accidents. Then suddenly two headlines seemed to leap up at him from the centre of the page, and he stood in a kind of leaden stupor as his eyes raced frantically through the paragraphs that followed.

The account ran thus:

TRAGEDY ON HIGHLAND AVENUE
Victim Found Dead in Library

Matthew D. Crane, a broker, was shot and killed late last night at his residence, No. 385 Highland avenue. The body was discovered early this morning huddled up in an armchair in the library. In the hall outside, near the front door, there was found another body, identified later as that of Henry (alias "Black") Sullivan, who has served two terms in Sing Sing for burglary. Near each of the bodies lay a .38 calibre automatic pistol, from which one shot had been fired. The autopsy showed that in each case death had been caused by a single .38 calibre bullet. One of the front windows in the basement bears the marks of a burglar's jimmy, but even a thorough examination of the premises reveals no other sign of anything unusual having occurred.

Unfortunately the servants seem unable to throw a single ray of light on the tragedy. Alice Colt, the housemaid, was away for the night visiting relatives, while Olga Svendsen, the cook, who is almost stone-deaf, declares that she slept straight through from nine to six without waking. The police, however, are not disturbed by any doubts as to what actually happened. According to their view, Sullivan must have blundered into the library, supposing it to be unoccupied. He found Crane there, and an exchange of shots followed, in which both men received mortal wounds. The broker died instantly, but Sullivan was able to stagger out to the front hall before he, too, expired. This theory has been definitely accepted by Inspector McKenna, who believes that the known facts of the case can be accounted for in no other way.

The inquest will be held at 10 to-morrow.

Mr. Crane, who was unmarried, is survived by a sister living in Buffalo.

NEW VOTING MACHINE ARRESTS "REPEATERS"

A VOTING machine that performs the complicated tasks of registering ballots, detecting and announcing frauds, and arresting the offender, has been designed by A. Ninot of New York City.

The machine, described in the Popular Science Monthly, is operated by dropping a small ball into a slot above the candidate's name and party emblem. When this has been done, the candidate's appreciation is expressed by a sign that flashes a "Thank you" directly beneath his photograph. The voter who attempts to cast more than one vote for a candidate by dropping more than one ball in the slot is quickly detected. If two balls are inserted, the word "Fraud" appears outside the voting booth, a bell rings loudly and the would-be "repeater" is locked inside the booth until an inspector arrives. At the close of the voting period, a small lever, operated by the official in charge of the balloting, reveals the vote.

The Trail of a Thief

by Merritt L. Allen

IF there is one thing about a detective's work which I detest, it is that of waiting for my victim to reappear after having shadowed him to some dwelling or public place. And to make matters worse the man whose footsteps Lyman Gale and I were dogging had done nothing of a criminal sort since he had been released from a recent stretch for forgery. But the chief felt sure that Jaquay would be up to something, as he was a clever worker and seldom remained out of mischief for any length of time.

Jaquay had walked directly from his rooming-house, where we had picked him up, to a chop suey joint. The only thing we could do was to wait outside until he had appeased his appetite.

"Might as well be happy as otherwise," Gale said cheerfully, pulling out his pipe and tobacco pouch. "I wonder just how near the chief hit it when he said that Jaquay was broke and would be turning a trick before long?"

I looked gloomily at Gale as he crammed the tobacco into his pipe and deftly lighted a match with his thumbnail. A weak stomach prevented me from smoking, and now I pulled a stick of gum from my pocket as if to keep him company.

"Dunno! Say, Gale, what was that stuff you were telling me about clairvoyance just before Jaquay went into the chink's?"

Gale puffed on his pipe several times in order to get the live coals evenly over the tobacco before he answered me.

"Most people think it's a gift, but I don't. It's nothing more or less than seeing the unseen by a careful and persistent observation of the seen."

"Eh?" I muttered, not comprehending.

Several people were coming out of the chop suey restaurant, but as soon as Gale was satisfied that Jaquay was not among them, he continued:

"That's right! Take Jaquay, for instance; we can determine a whole lot about his financial affairs by what he does during the next few weeks. Since we have been watching him he has bought three suits, several pairs of shoes, and he is staying at a fairly decent rooming-house. So we would infer that he isn't broke as yet."

I nodded my head, but kept my eyes fastened on the door from which Jaquay would appear. Long ago the chief had seen the wisdom of having Gale and I work together. Gale furnished the brains, while I was always in my element where there was plenty of rough and tumbling. The chief was constantly telling me to keep an eye on Gale, because he was the brains of

the force. And, strange to say, I never felt a twinge of envy at this unintended slam. I felt it an honor to work with a man like Gale. The chief's big reputation had been made through Gale's unbroken success, so it was no wonder that he worried about him whenever Gale was on a tough job.

I heard Gale knocking the ashes out of his pipe and came out of my dreams with a jerk. I knew what that knocking meant; Jaquay had come out of the joint. I had kept my eyes riveted on the door he came out of, but my thoughts had distracted my vision.

Gale sauntered across the street and kept close to Jaquay. I followed on the opposite side until the crowds began to thin out, when I joined Gale.

It was apparent that Jaquay had no definite destination in mind, now that he had his dinner, thus making our task the harder. Our man stopped several times to look into various shop windows. Once he turned to look at a flapper who had looked him over saucily as she passed. Gale had anticipated this very act and pulled me behind a group of men.

"Speaking of clairvoyance, Frank, how did I know he would turn around?"

"Ho!" I replied with a chuckle. "Most any fellow would turn and look at a chicken if she were good-looking and made bright eyes at him."

"Just so! Now if you and I analyze every act or happening, if that were possible, we would know a lot of things which will take place."

"Um, I suppose so. Perhaps you can tell me this: Is that bird trying to give us a good time or doesn't he know we're shadowing him?"

"Oh, he's just stretching himself. They're all the same. Just as soon as they get out they walk and walk straight ahead, as if to test their liberty."

We continued to follow Jaquay block after block until we came to the fine residential section of the city. Our task was proving too easy, and so became monotonous. Jaquay walked briskly ahead, and seldom turned his head either to the right or left. We both thought it best to do very little talking for fear of attracting Jaquay's attention. I liked this section of the city with its well-kept lawns and atmosphere of quietness. Our work for the most part was down among the wretchedness of the city, and I knew that Gale was enjoying this change as much as I.

Gale interrupted my line of thought by speaking in a low tone.

"There's H. P. Rhodes's residence," nodding his head toward a stately mansion which stood on a rise of ground and well back from the road. "There's the old man himself."

"Sounds as if he were a trifle hot under the collar," I chuckled, for there were angry words coming from the group which stood on the front veranda. Rhodes was shaking his fist at a young man who stood at the bottom of the steps looking up at him. By Rhodes's side was a young lady, apparently his daughter. She was dabbing at her eyes with a handkerchief.

"Now get me straight, you young whipper-snapper," Rhodes bellowed; "don't show your face around my daughter again or I'll jump on you with all fours; get, go on!" Rhodes commanded, coming down the steps.

My blood began to tingle.

"Wait a minute, Gale; let's see the fight," I begged. "Maybe I can butt in and have some fun."

Gale readily assented, for Jaquay had stopped and was watching the scene, too. We stepped back into a bit of shrubbery, where we could see all that was going on and not be seen ourselves.

The young man did not answer Rhodes's tirade, but turned and walked toward the street. Rhodes followed him to the front sidewalk, where the young man turned upon him.

"Mr. Rhodes, you've humiliated me today and have refused to let me marry your daughter. She loves me, of that I am sure, and I love her. It isn't right that you should keep us apart just because I'm not made of money. You've had your say, Mr. Rhodes, now hear me. We're going to be married and you can't stop us."

Rhodes was too much astonished to

move, and when he recovered from his surprise the young man had passed from view behind a high evergreen hedge.

"Shucks!" I exclaimed disappointedly. "I'll bet the old man could have put up a good scrap."

Gale was watching Jaquay, who had started off in the direction the young man had taken.

"You'll have enough excitement in a day or two. From what I have just seen and heard I predict trouble for somebody."

"Do you think the young scamp will make good his boast?" I asked eagerly.

"Perhaps."

"We'll be losing Jaquay if we don't hurry.

Gale turned and started back toward the heart of the city.

"Aren't you going to follow Jaquay any more?" I asked in surprise.

Gale shook his head.

"Let him go. I want to get back to my rooms where I can do some thinking."

Gale would not talk on our way back. I asked him several questions and made a few comments, but he was too much absorbed with his deductions to hear me. I made a half-hearted attempt to find a loose end which would indicate that there was deviltry in the air. It was a mighty poor attempt, and I soon found myself keeping time with my steps by saying: "What will happen? What will happen?"

I left Gale at his apartment. He was still so absorbed with his thoughts that he didn't bid me the usual "See you later." Gale was extremely courteous, even to old acquaintances, and for this reason the cloud of mystery grew denser than ever about me.

I didn't attempt to retire very early, because I knew that sleep would be remote after Gale's premonition. I could feel it in my every surrounding, or in the air, as people like to express it.

Twice I jammed on my hat, determined to go outside and hunt up a good movie, but as often I was reluctant to leave my rooms for fear I would be wanted. I tried to read an interesting serial in a magazine which I was following, but I couldn't make a go of this either. It must have been nearly two o'clock in the morning when I began preparations for bed.

When something is supposed to happen which is of a criminal nature, but you do not know just when, and the inevitable occurs, then it comes as a decided shock. I was drinking a glass of cold tea with a few drops of lemon in it when the telephone rang. The ringing of the bell gave me such a thrill that I dropped the glass, but could not move toward the telephone on my desk until it rang the second time.

"Hello?" I asked eagerly.

The chief was talking just as I had expected.

"Hello yourself and get right over to Gale's as quick as you can make it."

"What's matter?"

I was trembling from excitement, and my eyes hazed over. I stand ready to confess that I always feel this way until I'm in the midst of things.

"Rhodes's been robbed and his daughter abducted. Don't ask questions. Gale will tell what's expected of you."

"Good!" I shouted, starting to hang up the receiver.

"Hey!" I heard the chief yell. "Remember, take good care of Gale, if your job's worth anything to you."

"I'm just looking for trouble, chief," and hung up.

Gale was pacing up and down on the pavement in front of his apartment-house when I hurried up all out of breath.

"Looks as though trouble started before you expected, eh, Gale?" I asked.

"No, I expected a call. I haven't been to bed yet."

A taxi stood waiting by the curbing, and Gale took me by the elbow and hurried me inside. The streets were nearly deserted, and the driver crowded on all the speed his flivver could stand when Gale showed his badge, and I knew that he was hoping some cop would hold him up so he could give him the merry ha-ha.

"What's happened?" I hollered above the rattle of the engine.

"Rhodes's daughter has disappeared and about seventy-five thousand dollars' worth

of valuables, including a diamond necklace."

"It's that young scamp he was trying to put a scare into yesterday, I'll bet a century note."

Gale gave me a disgusted look.

"Frank, how many times must I tell you to stop and think before jumping at conclusions? Think over what you saw yesterday, and then make a safe bet."

I shook my head.

"I can't get your line of figuring, Gale."

H. P. Rhodes met us at the front door himself. If he was angry when I saw him last he was mad and distracted now.

"Get that young rascal who stole my daughter right out of my house—and jewels, too! Get busy!" he bellowed at us as soon as the door was opened.

"Mr. Rhodes," Gale replied calmly, "you are rather hasty, I'm afraid, toward the young man in question."

"Not a bit of it, not a bit of it," Rhodes stormed.

"What proof have you that the young man committed the theft?"

"Why, he threatened to persuade my daughter here to elope only yesterday. You're wasting precious time standing there. Every minute they are getting farther and farther away."

Gale held up his hand for Rhodes to keep still.

"Mr. Rhodes, I believe your dwelling is well equipped with a burglar-alarm system; in fact, I have heard that it is the best one obtainable?"

"Yes, why?"

"Are you sure you set it last night before you retired?"

"Of course, but——"

"Can you trust every one of your servants?"

"Their quarters are so situated that they cannot enter the main part of the building without ringing an alarm."

"Then," Gale replied, "your daughter turned it off."

"It's that young scallawag; he's got her hypnotized. Why don't you get down to the station or get to telephoning so as to stop them?"

Gale looked at Rhodes in disgust. He had no regard for a man's station in life except as it bore upon the case at hand.

"We can get along faster, Mr. Rhodes, if you will control your temper. If we jump at conclusions now we will have to start at the beginning again after losing valuable time."

H. P. Rhodes was a master mind in the business world, but he saw in Gale a man who could better cope with the present state of affairs.

"I guess you're right, but the disappearance of my daughter has shattered my nerves."

Gale smiled.

"I am also concerned about your daughter, Mr. Rhodes, but we can leave the young man out of the question as far as being connected with last night's work."

"What do you mean?"

"I called up Carlton Bevan, the young man in question, last night. His father was a long-standing friend of mine. He is ignorant of what has happened to your daughter, and Carlton will be working at his usual position in the Trust Company at nine o'clock."

Rhodes's face went white.

"Then tell me what has happened to my daughter. What's to be done?"

Gale stepped over to the telephone, and while central was making his connection he turned to Rhodes and explained his actions.

"I'm going to ask young Mr. Bevan to come here and help us to find your daughter. Young lovers have their favorite haunts, and he can probably find her in one of them. In time of distress a young lady will usually seek out such a place."

Rhodes shrugged his shoulders as if the whole matter had become a Chinese puzzle since Gale appeared on the scene. But I'll be honest and say that I caught myself frowning in perplexity. I began to look at things differently since entering the rich man's home. When Gale said that the daughter had turned off the alarm, I thought at once of the several cases on record at headquarters of wealthy young ladies who had mysteriously disappeared and were never

heard from. I wondered if Gale's system was working right, but then I was just as sure that it was not working right on several other occasions when he ended up the chase with the brass band playing. There was a possibility that he was trying to pacify the father, and there was a big chance that young Bevan did have something to do with Miss Rhodes's disappearance, even though he was traveling the daily routine.

I had seen Gale work just such tricks before.

After Gale had reached Bevan on the wire and had secured his promise to come at once he turned to Rhodes.

"Now, Mr. Rhodes, when Mr. Bevan appears I wish you would treat him with all due respect, for he is also much upset about your daughter. He agrees with me, and has one or two places in mind where she might possibly be stopping."

"I'll admit I was a bit nasty yesterday, but if he finds my child I will forgive much."

"So far, so good!" Gale said thoughtfully, and then turned to me. " Well, Frank, our next step will give you a chance to shine. We're going after the jewels now."

Gale turned upon reaching the door to the now mystified and bewildered Rhodes.

"We'll be back here inside of two hours either with the jewels or with some definite knowledge of where they can be found."

I could hardly wait until the door of the waiting taxi banged to and Gale gave the order to go before I burst out with

"Who's got the jewels?"

"Jaquay."

"Jaquay? I'd clean forgotten all about him. But how is he mixed up with this young Bevan and Rhodes's daughter? He didn't make young Bevan a proposition, did he, after he left us, that he would get the girl to him if he could make a haul?"

"If you'll just wait a little while longer everything will be explained. I would just be predicting what I reasonably believe, from what I've seen, has happened."

"How many will I have to fight?" I asked.

"One."

It did not take our taxi long to reach the address given by Gale. But I found out that we had several blocks to walk. Gale was too wise to buz up to the den and scare his fox away. Our destination was the rooming-house where we had picked up Jaquay's trail the day before. Gale and I crept up to the second floor and stopped before a door in the front of the hallway.

"I don't want him to give us the slip, so you go in first," Gale whispered to me.

I tried the door and found it locked.

"Who's there?" the unmistakable voice of Jaquay called.

I looked doubtfully at Gale.

"Here's a special delivery for you, just came in," Gale growled, in order to disguise his voice.

The ruse worked, but Jaquay didn't have a chance to get the door open more than a half-inch before I rushed. He was thrown over backward and went sprawling on the floor. Gale followed me into the room and closed and locked the door.

"Put the 'cuffs' on him, Frank."

But I found the task easier said than done. When I reached over Jaquay he kicked me in the stomach and winded me for a moment. While I was gasping for breath he made for the door, but of course Gale's foresight kept him from giving us the slip. I rushed and grabbed him from behind, but the rascal threw me clean over his shoulders. And to make matters worse for me I heard Gale chuckling. I saw him, for one fleeting moment, standing by one of the windows highly interested. There was blood in my eyes when I got up, but I was more cautious with my rushes. I advanced slowly and soon had Jaquay in one of the corners of the room.

He knew that he would have to give up eventually, but evidently he was going to do so in a game way. I reached out my right hand to grab him, and he made a swipe at me with his left. I ducked the blow only to have him land his right fist on my left eye. I saw a million stars and planets which have never been seen through a telescope, but I still had a good right eye, and before he could get in any more punches I had his arms pinioned to his sides.

Jaquay became as meek as a sick puppy as soon as I had the bracelets on him.

Gale had been inspecting the room in search of the stolen stones, but they were nowhere to be found.

"Where you got them hid?" I asked, twisting Jaquay's arm until he yelled with pain.

"I don't know what you guys are talkin' about. I'm straight. You ain't got nothin' on me," Jaquay leered.

Gale nodded toward the door which he had unlocked.

"Bring him along. We're all invited up to Mr. Rhodes's house, and he'll talk then, if I'm not very much mistaken; I want that young man Bevan to get a square deal."

I was not eager to go back to the Rhodes place. I wanted to get something soothing on my eye. When I passed a mirror in the hallway of the Rhodes place and saw how black and swollen my eye looked, it required a push from Gale to get me into the room where three people were waiting for us. Young Bevan had evidently found the girl without any trouble, for she sat there rather stiff and uncomfortable in a hard-back chair, looking first at her lover and then at her father.

"Who have you got there?" Rhodes blurted out as soon as Gale came into the room after Jaquay and I.

Gale nodded at Miss Rhodes, who had jumped to her feet.

"Oh, father, I know who he is; I've seen him before. Now you will believe me that Carlton had nothing to do with the robbery. There is the man who took the jewelry," pointing her slender little index finger at the baffled Jaquay.

Jaquay cursed under his breath, and I had to kick his ankle to make him keep quiet.

Gale went over to the other side of the room and stood by the girl's side, as if to compose her nerves, for she was shaking all over from the present excitement and from what she had been through.

"Miss Rhodes, we would like to hear your story first, please," said Gale.

"Last night I had some personal trouble, and I couldn't get to sleep. My rooms are on the ground floor, but I didn't dare go out on the porch because daddy had the alarm set, and if I opened the glass doors a bell would ring in his room. Finally I dozed off while trying to read a book. I don't know just what time it was, but I heard some one tapping lightly on my door from the outside. I looked up scared, for there was that man looking in at me," pointing at Jaquay. "I didn't scream, for he signaled with a finger at his lips to be still. I ran over to the door and asked him what he wanted. He informed me that Mr. Bevan wanted to see me for just a few minutes, but that he didn't dare come up to the house. He named a place a short distance down the street where he said Mr. Bevan was waiting. I threw a cloak over my shoulders and——"

"Pardon me, Miss Rhodes," Gale interrupted, "but how did you get out of the house without sounding an alarm?"

"Oh, I turned the alarm off."

"Thank you; I just wanted that part clear."

Gale nodded for her to proceed.

"I couldn't find Mr. Bevan, although I waited for perhaps ten minutes. Then I hurried back home just in time to see that man," pointing again at Jaquay, "coming through my door with a suitcase. I called to him to stop, but he disappeared in the darkness. I was about to hurry into the house when father came in my room. I didn't dare go in then for fear father would think Mr. Bevan had something to do with what had happened."

"And where did Mr. Bevan find you this morning?" Gale asked.

"At my chum Margaret Shelley's home. You see, she introduced me to Mr. Bevan."

Gale turned to Rhodes and smiled dryly as if to say: "What did I tell you?"

The shrinking Jaquay brought to every one's mind the fact that the valuables were unaccounted for as yet, but Gale seemed very sure of himself.

"Now to clear up a point or two; my assistant and myself saw the little scene on the front porch yesterday afternoon, and Jaquay here saw it, too. He saw a chance for a nice big harvest of jewels. When Mr.

Bevan left he dogged his steps in the hope that he would carry out his threat and elope with Miss Rhodes, thus giving him a chance to slip into your house unobserved."

Gale turned upon Jaquay quickly and snapped out:

"Right?"

Jaquay nodded his head in the affirmative and started to curse, but another kick on his ankle from my service shoe silenced him once more, and Gale proceeded:

"I knew Mr. Bevan's father and knew that his son would never do such a thing as he had threatened under a trying moment. When Jaquay found out that there was no help from Mr. Bevan he attempted to turn the trick himself. All he wanted was access into the house without sounding an alarm."

Rhodes was all humility by this time and ready to eat humble pie. He slipped an arm about his daughter's waist, and the two walked over to where Bevan was standing. Rhodes stuck out his paw, and Bevan grabbed it.

"Mr. Bevan, I guess I've misjudged you. Let us put the matter in this light: I don't want you young people to get married as yet, but—uh—er—let's see more of you."

Gratitude stuck right out of Miss Rhodes's eyes, and I was afraid that she would start to fuss about my eye, but women are funny; even Gale has to admit that he's never sure what they'll be about when judging from their actions.

"Oh, Mr. Detective," said Miss Rhodes, addressing Gale, "please don't send this man to jail. Just think, if he hadn't taken the jewelry, daddy would still be angry at Mr. Bevan."

Gale laughed, but grew serious immediately. His great enjoyment is to run a criminal down, but he has often told me that he feels like a crook himself for being the means of sending a man up the river. However, his next move showed that he still had a card to play in this little game.

"I must do my duty, Miss Rhodes, but if Jaquay will tell us where he has hidden the jewelry perhaps we can get his sentence made light. Another thing, your father is a good friend of the judge."

Gale looked expectantly toward Jaquay, who was beginning to appear brighter.

"They're hidden in Charlie's saloon. But you won't pinch him, will yuh?"

"Not if you get them."

A half-hour later the jewels were returned to Rhodes, and I had a fresh beefsteak on my eye.

It was after Jaquay received a light sentence of six months that I asked Gale how he drew his conclusion as to what would happen before it actually did.

"I'll tell you, Frank. I was trying to determine what trick I would turn if I were Jaquay when the rumpus started in front of the Rhodes place. And—well, just as I have told you a dozen or a hundred times, I could see the unseen by looking at the seen."

OFF BEAT

PATROLMAN MICHAEL FIASCHETTI, former head of the Italian Division of the Detective Bureau, New York, who was demoted and transferred to patrol duty Aug. 26, was assigned for ten days to District Attorney Banton for work on the Varotta kidnapping-murder case. Fiaschetti, while heading the Italian Division, arrested five men in the case, three of whom have been convicted of murder. The trials of the other two are still pending.

The five accused of murder for the death of the Varotta boy were in custody at the time his murder is calculated to have been committed. Two men are believed to have taken the boy away, and as a means of preventing further exposure killed him. These are the men Mr. Banton wants Fiaschetti to find.

The Sewers of Paris

IT is true a descent into the sewers of Paris does not sound attractive, particularly when there are so many more agreeable ways of spending an hour or two elsewhere; but as a curiosity the sight is unsurpassed. The rendezvous on our card was named the Place du Chatelet opposite the theatre. The morning was fine but sultry, and the prospect of a storm loomed in in the immediate future. This, be it noticed in passing, only added to the weird charm of the subterraneous voyage we were about to undertake. By half-past ten o'clock our exploring party had assembled on the spot. It was a motley group of tourists, some thirty strong, and one-third ladies. I need hardly tell you they were nearly all Americans. The most interesting among them were a dissenting parson and his wife. They were a strangely matched couple. He was tall, thin, and taciturn; she was short, fat and talkative; so my facetious friend at once christened them Don Quixote and Sarah Gamp. They were both well-armed for the expedition; the lady bore a large bottle of eau de Cologne, and the gentleman a family-sized brandy flask, and with the two they evidently felt themselves safe. I must add that the majority of the party had provided themselves with scent or cordial of some kind in view of coming dangers.

After waiting half an hour—for French, official or unofficial, are never punctual—our guide, philosopher and friend arrived. He was a little man, dressed in black, with a white choker, just as if he were going to a wedding or the opera. He belonged, I believe, to the Points de Chaussees department of the municipal administration. Anyhow, he was evidently accustomed to inspection, for he examined our tickets and eyed our persons as if we were so many Guy Fawkses, bent on blowing up the town. This done, he ordered his men to open the large iron-plated trap which leads to the nether regions, and, descending the steps, invited us to follow. The ladies felt for their handkerchiefs and smelling bottles, the gentlemen lit up their cigars or "nipped" at their flasks, and, casting strange glances at one another, they all silently and solemnly, one by one, in Indian file, went down. But great was their surprise and intense their delight when they got below. Instead of the horrid dark continent they had pictured drainageland to be, they found themselves in a large clean, well-lit vault, which may be described as a kind of station conducting to the various sewers that intersect the quarter. We were under the city of Paris.

Our attention was drawn to a number of small open cars that were shunted on rails into the vault from a dark siding. The wonderment of the company was now almost complete. The cars were of polished oak, with bright brass trimmings, and were lit up at the corners with elegant lamps bearing white globes. We were at once requested to mount. My friend and I jumped into the car at the head of the train, determined at any risk to be the first to enter the mysterious kingdom of pipes and arches. The next second the whistle sounded for our departure. And away we went at a smart pace right into the central drain, which runs beneath the Rue de Rivoli. The arch is about four yards wide. The drain proper takes up seven or eight feet, and there is a curbing on either side of two feet. The two rails on which the train moves are laid down on the edge of these curbings. The train is towed by men who run along the narrow footpaths with marvelous dexterity. It is true, if they fell into the dirty water they would not be drowned, for it is not deep, and there is little danger save during the floods, when the drain is turned into a roaring torrent. As we glide along, we are more and more

struck with the sweetness of the sewer. I have been through many and many a railway tunnel far more disagreeable. The walls are kept clean, and all the pipes which run through it—and there are all sorts and sizes—are neatly painted. What also strikes us is that down here we can find out where we are just as easily as we can above. The names of the streets and the numbers of the houses in the Rue de Rivoli are fixed on the walls in white characters on blue enameled tables, so that there is no fear of even a stranger, if he happens to wander here alone, losing himself.

But what is that large red light which gleams so sinisterly in the murky distance? Surely it can't be another train coming up on the same line! The parson's wife becomes uneasy. She was on the point of fainting, when the assurances of the guide, supplemented by Timothy's flask, brought her back to her senses. No, there was no danger; it was only the stationary light at the end of the sewer, which had just been turned on us for our amusement. As we neared it, our speed slackened, and in a few minutes we halted at another station. Here we were told to descend, and naturally we thought our voyage at an end. But a further surprise was in store.

I found we were under the Place de la Concord. Here there is a larger drain, which, passing under the Rue Royale, leads to the church of the Madeleine. But before being introduced to it our guide proceeded to give us an explanation of the hydraulic machinery used at this spot for the raising or lowering of the waters. It was very interesting to hear, but would be dull to read, so we pass it over. *En avant, mesdames et messieurs!* and away we marched into the big sewer on the right, where we saw three or four barges—I cannot honestly call them gondolas—floating lazily on the stream. One by one we embarked in them, the ladies being handed down by the grimy-faced, sea-booted captain of the fleet with a grace and gentleness which no waterman in Venice could equal. I am sorry to say the boats were not so clean as the cars we had just left, but our gallant guide at once ordered wrappers to be placed on the seats for the benefit of the ladies.

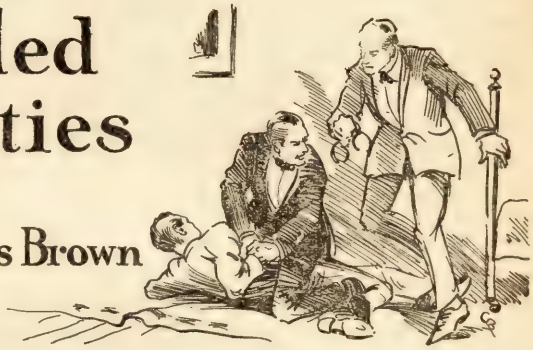
Everybody being made as comfortable as could be expected under the circumstances, we weighed anchor. Each boat was lit up with a large lamp, and towed along by two men. Occasionally we bumped against our neighbor's bark, and now and then there was a rush of water from some siding which acted like a gentle wave and sent us up and down. Our stout lady assured Timothy she began to feel unwell, and the flask was again brought into service. *"N'ayez pas, peur, madame,"* said the captain, *"vous n'aurez pas le met de mer ici"* ("You will not be seasick here"). On we sailed, gazing at the network of pipes above or looking into the troubled stream below, while the noise of the omnibuses rattled over our heads like muffled thunder, and doubtful springs gurgled forth from small mysterious openings in the side of the arch.

At length we reached the Madeleine, and our boats were moored. The trip was now over. One by one we came up through another large iron plated trap, and after giving a trifle to the bargemen—who are, of course, strictly forbidden to take fees—we stepped once more into the upper world, having traveled three miles by rail and water under the city of Paris. Timothy was the last person to ascend. As he emerged into the sunlight he opened his mouth for the first time and exclaimed to his better-half, "I hope, my love, you left *some* brandy in the flask."

Shuffled Identities

by

Edward Sparks Brown



"THE United Gas shares you phoned me to get for your friend are here—fifty thousand strong," said Broker Morton, holding out a rubber-banded packet to his visitor, a tall, alert-eyed, breezy-mannered young man in gray-green tweeds, standing near the room's only window.

"Fine," exclaimed the young man. Taking the packet, he slipped the band off and rapidly checked the shares. "An even fifty thousand is right," he nodded. "Easily disposed of, too, I'm told."

"There's no better stock on the market, I tell you," cried the big broker, banging his fist on his desk. "Your friend could turn them over in five minutes if he so desired."

"Glad to hear that, for you never can tell what a fellow may want to do," said the young man as he slipped the packet into an inside pocket of his coat. "Now, I suppose you want some mon—— Good heavens!" he abruptly broke off, pointing out the window. "Look there!"

Morton, half rising, stared out the window, but saw nothing of a startling nature.

"What do you——" he began, and stopped abruptly, his head whirling as though suddenly caught in a cyclone's grip. Something had struck him lightly on the upper lip, something that seemed to spray out like liquid, a few drops of the fluid entering his nostrils.

And as it struck the breath seemed to be forcibly sucked from the broker's body; he gasped, choked, swayed dizzily for a moment, then suddenly collapsed across his desk, senseless.

The bond broker regained consciousness as rapidly as he had lost it. He was sprawled on the floor, arms bound to his sides with strong cord, a tightly drawn towel gag effectively smothering the exclamation of anger that rushed to his lips as he became swiftly aware of his immediate predicament.

Above him stood Kidder, his breezy visitor, an amused smile on his lips.

"Sorry to mess you up like this," he said in mock apology, "but the exigencies of the moment demand rough action. You were under just long enough for me to tie you, so your mind is still perfectly clear. Listen now, while I set you straight on a few things.

"To begin with, I'm not the Kidder you think I am, and I'm not kidding, either. The Kidder you think I am is my twin brother George, the man you've been play-

ing billiards and otherwise chumming with for the last three months. I'm telling you this to clear my dear brother in your eyes of robbing you of these shares. Not that I have any love for him, understand, for I haven't. But I don't want him to go in the pen for this, because I want to use him again some day for some more easy money.

"Don't think this is the first time I've pulled a job like this, and I'll pull more. Beloved George was the family saint, I the jet-black sheep, and he gave me the bumps from kidhood up. But I'm getting even, damn him, damn him, smearing up the name he's so proud of, and incidentally picking up some easy money along the way."

A gleam of hate appeared in the speaker's eyes, and his voice grated harshly. Then, swiftly, his mood changed and he laughed shortly.

"But family troubles to the scrapheap. Time is passing, as the pickpocket said when he lifted a watch, and I must be flitting along. See this?"

"This" was a small liquid pistol held close upon the questioner's palm.

"It's loaded with a powerful narcotic from India and ether. The two make a very quick and effective sleep producer, as you doubtless know. A few whiffs of it and you don't care what happens, which makes my getaway dead easy."

"Before I go, though," the smooth voice hurried on, "I want you to be thoroughly convinced that I'm not George. We are identical twins, yet there are several points of difference between us. For one thing George sports a gold crown on one of his front teeth. My own teeth, it happens, are still sound. See?"

Opening his mouth, the brisk-speaking young man disclosed a set of crownless milk-white teeth.

"Another and more convincing proof that I'm not George is my voice," he went on. "At the moment it is like dear brother's." He paused, inserted a finger between his lips and drew forth a small object that had been clinging to the roof of his mouth. "But how about now?" he asked with a grin.

The change in his voice was startling. Where before it had been remarkably clear, even fluid, it was now of a pronounced lower pitch and carried a marked nasal twang.

"The difference is in this," holding out the object he had taken from his mouth, a thin piece of aluminum bent double in a peculiar manner. "It cost a quarter and is worth a thousand—at a time like this.

"But enough of this chatter," he broke off, glancing at his watch. "Do you understand what I've been saying?"

The broker nodded, his eyes, snapping angrily, boring into those of the man above him, then dropping to the hand gripping the liquid gun.

"Good!" The thieving member of the Kidder family dropped suddenly on one knee. "Time I was going. Like to stay and keep you company, but it's business before pleasure with me at all times. Besides, a little shot of this liquid and you won't care for company, anyway. Pleasant dreams!"

Extending the little pistol, he held it close to the broker's nostrils and pressed the trigger.

And to the bound man there again came the sensation of having the breath sucked from his body. His senses reeled, his head seemed to swell as an inflated balloon, then suddenly collapse, and he knew no more.

At about seven that evening, as the janitor of the Easton building entered the reception-room of Morton & Sills, bond brokers, he was startled by a muffled pounding from one of the inner offices.

As he stood listening the pounding was repeated, this time with increased violence.

Mystified, the janitor started to investigate.

Guided by the pounding, he made his way to Broker Morton's private office and jerked open the door of the clothes closet.

Astonished at sight of the bound form on the floor, the janitor quickly released the broker and removed the gag.

"Thanks, Parker," said the big man, rising with an effort and swaying from the effects of the powerful drug that still exerted an influence over him. "Kick that chair over here, will you?"

"What in thunder's happened, Mr. Morton?" asked the janitor as he helped the broker to a seat himself. "Been robbed?"

"Maybe, maybe not," Morton answered shortly. "But see here, Parker," he quickly added, "I don't want you to breathe a word of this to any one. Understand?"

"I'll keep quiet if you say so, of course," the janitor replied slowly. "But it seems to me that such things should be reported."

"Damn it, Parker, do as I say," snapped the big man irritably. "I know what I'm doing, and I'll stand back of you if you get into any trouble for not reporting this. Here, maybe this will help to plaster your mouth."

From a wallet unmolested by his late visitor the broker extracted a bill and tendered it to the mulish-minded janitor.

"Just as you say, Mr. Morton; just as you say," rushed from the man's lips as he caught sight of the bill's denomination. "Anything I can do for you?"

"Yes," was the terse reply. "Keep on with your rounds and leave me alone. I've got some important work to do, and don't want to be disturbed. Good-night!"

After the janitor's departure the big man sat quietly for several minutes. Then, rising slowly, he went to the washbowl and spent considerable time bathing his head and face in cold water.

An hour later, refreshed in mind and body, the bond dealer left his office and went direct to the Brokers' Club.

Catching sight of his friend Detective Cole in the reading-room, Morton hurried over and dropped into a chair beside him.

"Where the deuce have you been all afternoon?" Cole burst out. "Tried to get you several times, both at your apartment and office, but couldn't raise an echo."

"I've been somewhat occupied," Morton replied, smiling grimly. "Seen anything of George to-day?"

"Why, yes," Cole answered. "He went up to bed an hour or so ago. What's up?"

"Quite a bit is both up and away," said Morton. "For one thing I've been neatly robbed of fifty one-thousand-dollar United Gas shares by a clever young man I'm itching to meet again."

"United Gas shares!" Cole exclaimed, gripping the big broker's arm. "Do you mean to tell me that you're the man Kidder's twin brother got the United Gas shares from that he sold to me?"

"What's that—sold to you?" Morton leaned forward, his own features lined with amazement. "Well, I'll be eternally hanged," he exclaimed. "And you a detective. Can you beat that this side of Halifax? How'd he come to sell them to you?"

"How?" Cole brushed the ashes from his dead cigar. "Why, he called me up this morning and made an appointment to sell me the shares for a friend of his who was leaving town this evening. Had me get cash money for them, too. Dropped into my office with the shares a little after twelve, and I gave him fifty one-thousand-dollar bills for them. I didn't suspect a thing, of course, for I saw that the shares were genuine and naturally took him to be George Kidder, our mutual friend."

"And just when and how did you find out that he wasn't George?" Morton asked.

"This afternoon," Cole replied. "I had just finished a case I was on and I dropped in here about three and found George in the library. Suggested a game of billiards and he agreed, remarking that he felt better than he had this morning. Told him he'd looked all right when he was in my office at noon, and he looked at me as though I'd gone crazy. Said he hadn't been out of the building all day, that he'd been sick last night and stayed in bed until well after noon.

"Naturally this rather bowled me over, and I told him what had happened. He seemed considerably upset and asked me up to his room. I went, and this is what he told me:

"He said, in substance, that he had a twin brother, Al by name, who was the bad egg of the family nest. Said this brother had impersonated him before to get money or something else he wanted, but that never before had he pulled off anything of the present magnitude. Said he had saved his brother from jail in the past, but that he was now through, that this was the last act on the program. Said there was little doubt

but what his brother had stolen the shares, but that until we found out from whom there was little we could do. I could see that he was cut pretty deep, so I broke away and came downstairs. But how under the sun did he get the shares from you?"

Briefly Morton related the manner in which the shares had passed from his possession, ending with the question, "Have you checked up on George's story about being sick?"

"Yes, I have," the detective nodded. "I'll admit that the thing seemed rather fishy to me after I came downstairs, so I quizzed Joe, the bellboy. Asked him if he'd seen Kidder about this morning, and he said George had called him about eleven to get him some headache medicine and that he was then in bed. So that settled that part of it, for it was only a few minutes after eleven when Kidder, or rather his brother, got me on the phone."

"Couldn't Kidder have phoned from his room here?" Morton asked. "I'm pretty well convinced that the man we know had nothing to do with it, as far as that goes, but I want to check up on every point."

"He could have phoned from here, of course, but he didn't," Cole answered. "I thought of that angle myself and asked Collins, the desk clerk, and he said he was positive that no one had phoned from Kidder's room to-day. I've mulled this thing over pretty well, and I've reached the conclusion that George is telling the truth, fishy though it may sound. Hang it, how could he pull a stunt like this and expect to get away with it? No, Morton, the boy is straight, and it's up to me to find his brother and put him where he won't be in a position to do anything of this sort again."

"You can bet your last dollar we'll find him," said the big broker grimly. "I don't mind dropping fifty thousand in a straight deal, but I'll be hanged if I'm going to lose it like this and make no effort to get it back. Let's run up and see George now. He may have some idea as to where this slick brother of his is headed for."

Rising, the two hurried to the elevator, entered and were whisked up four floors, where Morton rapped sharply upon the door of room 414. A second rap was necessary before a mumbled "Come in" responded.

Entering, they found the man they sought sitting up in bed, his eyes still drugged with sleep.

"Sorry to disturb you, George, but we're after information that can't wait," said Morton as he closed the door. "Do you know where we can find your brother?"

"My brother?" The man on the bed swung his feet to the floor and sat staring in wide-eyed attention. "Good lord, Mr. Morton," he cried, "don't tell me that you're the man Al got the shares from that he sold to Mr. Cole."

"That's just what I'm telling you, George," said the big broker bluntly. "But your brother. Any idea where he can be found?"

"This cuts me to the quick, Mr. Morton," cried Kidder, his voice trembling. He jumped to his feet and began pacing the floor, hands locked behind him. "I'd rather have lost an arm than to have had this happen to you—both of you," he went on. "And as to Al's present whereabouts, I have no more idea than you have. If I had—well, I'd like nothing better than to turn him over to you, Mr. Cole. He belongs behind the bars, and that's where he'll go now if I can put him there. I dare say that Mr. Cole here has told you what I related to him concerning my brother's actions in the past."

"Naturally he has," Morton answered, his eyes searching Kidder from head to foot. "Now, George," the big broker continued, "you must admit that this is a strange affair. A smart young man with your voice phones me this morning to get him fifty one-thousand-dollar United Gas shares for a friend of his who was leaving town. It happened that I'd just got hold of that amount an hour or so before, so I told this young man to come up and get 'em, thinking that he was you. Well, a little after twelve this same smart young man comes to my office, neatly puts me to sleep and gallops off with the shares, neglecting

to leave any money behind to pay for them. And but for one or two things, George, I'd swear you were that smart young man."

"Good heavens, Mr. Morton, you don't think that I did it, do you?" burst from Kidder as he abruptly halted his nervous pacing. "Why, I couldn't have done it. I wasn't out of this room from ten o'clock Friday night until well after noon to-day."

Detective Cole eyed him narrowly and felt sure he was innocent.

"Easy, George, easy," Morton admonished. "I'm not saying you did do it, nor am I saying you didn't—positively. You could have done it, even though seen here a little after eleven, by slipping out in disguise and telephoning from a public booth. However, there are two or three things in your favor—your voice and that gold crown on your front tooth. The man who was in my office had no crown, and his voice was much different from yours after taking a neat little contrivance out of his mouth. How did he impress you, Cole?" turning to the detective. "Looked pretty much like George here, didn't he?"

"He certainly did," Cole nodded. "Couldn't tell 'em apart, looks, voice and all. That is, except for the clothes. The man who was in my office wore gray tweeds, and I've never seen George here wear anything but blue serge."

"I've worn blue serge exclusively for years," Kidder put in eagerly. "That ought to be another alibi, hadn't it? I swear to you both that I'm absolutely innocent of any connection whatsoever with this affair. Do you think for a second that if I had I'd be here talking to you? Not on your life. I'd be as far from here as a fast train could take me. Besides," he added, smiling at Cole, "even if I were a crook I wouldn't have the nerve to try to swindle a detective. That would be the height of impudence."

"I guess you wouldn't, George," Morton agreed. "At least I think I wouldn't. But there's something that's bothering me, something I either saw or felt in my office while your brother was there. When I find out what it is I'll know, and know positively, just where you stand in this thing. And I hope you stand right, George. When you dropped in here three months or so ago I took a liking to you and put you up at the club. Since then we—the three of us," nodding toward the detective, "have been together quite a bit. I'd hate to think that you deliberately worked your way into our friendship for the purpose of putting over a trick like this."

"Of course I didn't, Mr. Morton," Kidder cried, running a hand over his thick head of hair. "I'm as innocent as a new——"

The sentence was cleanly clipped by startling action on the part of Broker Morton. Reaching out with amazing swiftness, the big man gripped Kidder's wrists, jerked that suddenly breathless individual forward, neatly kicked his shoeless feet from under him, and, as he fell, twisted the man's arms behind his back, and so held him, face downward, upon the floor.

"Quick, Cole; rip that sheet into strips and tie him," Morton tersely directed. "Hurry, man; ask questions afterward."

"Get him off, Mr. Cole," came the muffled plea of the man underneath. "He's gone batty."

"You bet I've gone batty," grunted the big broker as he exerted his strength in keeping Kidder pinned to the floor. "Batty enough to twist your arm out of socket if you don't keep quiet. Get a wiggle on with that sheet, Cole; he's blamed slippery."

The officer, astonished beyond words, mechanically did as requested. Ripping a sheet into several strips, he twisted them together, and while Morton held the struggling man's wrists firmly Cole bound his arms tightly with the improvised rope.

"Now get a towel," said the big man, and Cole hastily procured one.

Grabbing a handful of Kidder's hair, Morton raised his head from the floor, slipped the towel across the prostrate man's mouth and pulled it tight.

Kidder, despite his arms being bound, put up a terrific fight to keep from being gagged, working the towel out of his mouth several times before the broker succeeded in tying it beyond immediate removal.

"There, you dirty crook; lay there until

I'm through," said the big broker as he rose to his feet. "A slick game you played, I must say. But you made the inevitable slip every crook makes—you overlooked the one thing that glaringly convicts you of being the man who robbed me."

"Now, Morton, you want to be sure about this," said Cole, glancing uneasily at the bound man on the floor. "You'll get into a nasty mess if——"

"Don't worry; I know what I'm doing," Morton interrupted. "If I don't, I'll stand the consequences."

While speaking the big broker had started a thorough search of the room. Drawers were pulled out and their contents subjected to minute inspection. Even the walls and floor came in for attention.

The detective, dumfounded at the unexpected turn of affairs, stood watching the searching man in silence.

Catching up the blue serge suit hung carefully over the back of a chair, Morton pulled forth the contents of the various pockets, his interest centering on the bunch of keys.

"You recognize this, don't you, Cole?" he asked, sliding one of the keys free from the ring and holding it out. "It's a Union Trust safe deposit box key. No other bank in town has this pattern. That's where we'll find the fifty thousand. We can get the box number from Wilson, custodian of the vault."

"I can't believe it," said Cole doubtfully. "Having a key to a safe-depost box doesn't prove George a crook. He might——"

"Sure he might," Morton interrupted. "But don't fret about it, Cole. I understand this thing from soup to nuts now. A neat game, but the cards got mixed in the shuffle and spoiled it. Wait a minute until I take a peek into the trunk in the clothes closet, and I'll explain things to you."

Dragging the small steamer trunk from the closet, the big broker quickly opened it with the aid of one of the keys on the ring he still carried.

Hats, shirts and other apparel were taken out, searched and flung aside until the trunk stood empty.

"Thought so," Morton nodded after carefully tapping and fingering the trunk's bottom. "False, like its owner. Look."

Cole, striding over, saw Morton lift out a section of the trunk's bottom, revealing a hidden pocket containing a small liquid pistol and two thin pieces of aluminum bent double in a peculiar manner.

"Neat contrivance, these," said Morton, fingering the pieces of aluminum. "And there being two explains how he worked it. Slipped one in his mouth to change his voice and showed me the other, making it appear that he had just taken it out. Finding these and this squirt-gun cinches his guilt beyond question."

"But how in thunder did you suspect this?" Cole asked in amazement. "What came over you so suddenly that caused you to grab Kidder like that?"

"One of those hunches that strike you like a bolt of lightning," the big broker replied. "Up to that instant I was pretty well convinced that Kidder had a twin brother, as he had said, and that it was the twin who had robbed me. But when I happened to get a good look at his finger as he ran his hand over his head I knew he was guilty of the robbery himself, that he was his own twin, so to speak."

"Knew by his finger?" Cole showed his surprise.

"Yes," Morton nodded, looking down at the man on the floor, who was staring up at him in impotent rage. "See that wide-banded signet ring he wears?"

Cole, looking, nodded.

"Well," Morton continued, "the instant I got a good look at it it came over me like a flash that the last thing I noticed before going to sleep from the effects of this squirt-gun's load was a dead white circle of skin on one of Kidder's fingers, a finger that had long worn a tight ring. That's what I've been racking my brains about all evening, the thing I meant when I said that something I had seen or felt in my office would either prove Kidder guilty or innocent."

"Well, by Jove, you are a better detective than I am."

"The ring was what tripped him, the inevitable slip every crook makes. And it

would have tripped him either way. Had he worn it it would have been a dead give-away because of its odd design. Not wearing it, and showing the dead white circle of skin was a dead give-away, anyway. I suppose if I hadn't noticed it he'd have stuck around a few days keeping up a search for himself, then dropped from sight with the fifty thousand. Guess we'd better call the police now and put him where he belongs."

Two steps toward the wall telephone and the big broker stopped, bent over and picked up an object from the rug.

"The final nail in his coffin," he said, holding out a gold crown on the palm of his hand. "Must have come off while I was gagging him. Evidently made to slip over a perfectly sound tooth. You're a slick bird, young fellow, but the police will soon clip your wings so you won't be able to fly for some time to come."

And the big broker again started for the telephone.

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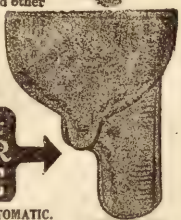

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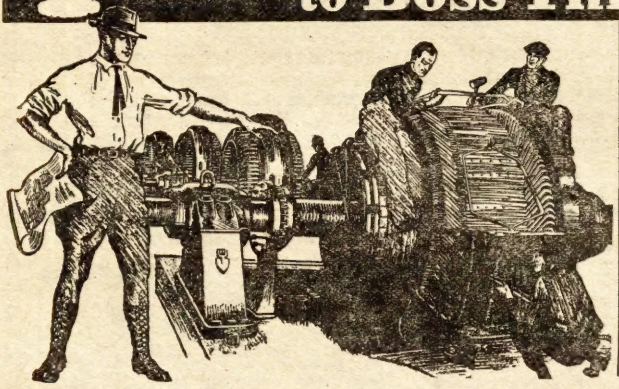

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Then why remain in the "small pay" game—in a line of work that offers—No Big Promotion—No Big Income—No Big Future?

Fit yourself for a Big Job.

Your Success Is Guaranteed

So sure am I that you can learn electricity—so sure am I after studying with me, you too get in the "big money" class in electrical work, that I will guarantee under Bond to return every single penny paid me in tuition if, when you have finished my Course you are not satisfied it was the best investment you ever made.

"Electrical Experts" Earn $12 to $30 a Day

Be an Electrical Expert

Today even the ordinary electrician—the "screw-driver" kind—is making money—big money. But it's the trained man—the man who knows the whys and wherefores of Electricity—the "Electrical Expert"—who is picked out to "boss" ordinary electricians—to boss the big jobs—the jobs that pay **$3,500 to $10,000 a Year.** Get in line for one of these "Big Jobs" by enrolling now for my easily-learned, quickly-grasped, right-up-to-the-minute Spare Time Home Study Course in Practical Electricity.

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As Chief Engineer of the Chicago Engineering Works, I know exactly the kind of training a man needs to enable him to get and hold good positions, and to earn big pay. I not only know, but I give you that training—I will train you as I have trained thousands of other men who, today, are holding splendid electrical positions, or are in business for themselves as Electrical Contractors.

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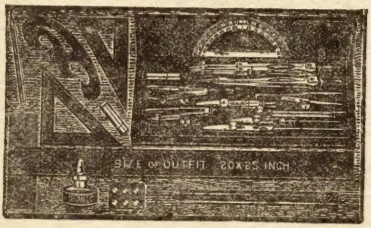

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